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1	Interviewer: OK, so I know we've, kind of, you've had a read of the info already
2	John: Yeah
3	Interviewer: So you know a little bit, er, about the study, so I think we should just,
4	er, kick off – I want to ask you a really general question, sort of, can you tell me, sort
5	of, what studying at conservatoire's like, what's studying at the RCM like?
6	John: So, I suppose, you can only compare it to what you've had before.
7	Interviewer: Mhm
8	John: So, I studied back in [country], in [city], do you know [city]? There's a, there's
9	good music there, it's, it's not really considered a conservatory, but like, I guess it
10	kind of is, it looks like one –
11	Interviewer: Right
12	John: So, I suppose, anything that I've experienced here so far can only be compared
13	to there really, erm, here it's just overwhelming, overwhelmingly positive, for me
14	anyway. Again, in talking to other people in different areas, it can be a different
15	experience, but for me anyway – I'm on the collaborative piano course, so it's a very
16	small Masters, like, there's only three in my year, and then there's three in the year
17	above, so like, six of us literally –
18	Interviewer: OK
19	John: It's very small, erm, quite niche, whereas the solo piano, there's, there must
20	be 150 in this school, like
21	Interviewer: Right
22	John: Across the four years of the degree and the masters, so yeah, my area's quite
23	niche and small, but it's 100% positive, I've had no negative performing
24	experiences or negative teaching experiences
25	Interviewer: OK
26	John: So I think I'm very lucky [laughs]
27	Interviewer: Mmm, yeah, that's interesting. And, you talked about the course as
28	very small –
29	John: Yeah
30	Interviewer: Is that, how do you think that relates, sort of, to your experience, kind
31	of, the small numbers?

32	John: It, it just makes such a huge difference, because, solo piano is, like,
33	undoubtedly so competitive
34	Interviewer: Mmm
35	John: Now, people are, people are still friends even if they're solo pianists, but, but
36	just in general, like, globally, the, the idea of being a soloist is a competitive thing,
37	because you're trying to win that competition, and, be better than this person, you
38	know, win this concerto competition
39	Interviewer: OK
40	John: Get this opportunity, whereas what we do, is, it it's only ever collaborative, so
41	we're only ever working with a singer or an instrumentalist or a chamber group or,
42	so we're always with other people, so there kind of is no, not saying that there <i>isn't</i>
43	any competition, because obviously we're all trying to establish a career as an
44	accompanist, or a collaborative pianist, but within our group, there's no, there's no
45	bad blood, there's no competitiveness or, it, it's weird –
46	Interviewer: Yeah
47	John: But it's lovely. Like, just when I was practising there actually, the other guy on
48	my course, er, he just saw that I was practising and he came in just to say hello.
49	Interviewer: Right
50	John: So we have a lovely dynamic, in our group, with the six of us. We're very lucky.
51	Interviewer: Mmm, yeah, so this is, it's a bit different from a standard, kind, of solo
52	John: Yeah, yeah
53	Interviewer: instrumentalist course
54	John: <i>[whispers]</i> It's completely different.
55	Interviewer: Mmm. So what, as part of your course, what do you do, kind of,
56	specifically?
57	John: Yeah, so, there's, there'd be different areas, so I suppose, the thing we
58	probably do the most is working with singers. So we get placed in language classes,
59	kind of throughout the terms, so could be Italian, or French, or German. And
60	sometimes singers will ask us, 'hey, you know, we're working on this piece, will you
61	come to my English song class?', or 'will you come to my lesson?'
62	Interviewer: Yeah

63	John: I go to singers' lessons, the ones that I'm working closely with, so it is a lot of
64	work with singers, so that'd be also entering external and internal competitions, like,
65	I played for an audition on Saturday, so, and you know, outside performances and
66	recitals. So that's one thing, is the singers. We do a small bit of repetiteur, like we
67	played for some opera scenes back in February, and we got offered to play more in
68	May if we wanted to. So that's kind of another, cos there's, so in [college] there's
69	not a specific repetiteur course, so there is in [college] and [college]
70	Interviewer: OK
71	John: Separate repetiteur courses, so that's kind of, slot into our course as well
72	Interviewer: I see, yeah
73	John: Erm, and the solo pianists can also take a module in repetiteur so they're kind
74	of with us as well, and one of the things we did as part of that was, we went to the
75	Royal Opera House just a couple of weeks ago to observe a rehearsal and just see,
76	there was one of the young artists in the Jet Parker scheme
77	Interviewer: Yeah the Jette Parker, yeah
78	John: Oh, the Yets?
79	Interviewer: Yeah, Jette Parker, yeah yeah
80	John: Yeah, Jette Parker, so one of the repetiteur young artists was playing for the
81	session and it was Antonio Pappano was conducting
82	Interviewer: Great
83	John: Artistic Director, I was like, OK, it was, yeah, that was incredible, so, so that's
84	the kind of opera side, and then instrumentally, there's no limit, I mean, you could
85	just be playing for anyone in here, any, any instrument, I mean, I've worked with a
86	flautist quite a bit and a cellist, and I'm going to be working with a violinist, so I'm
87	quite, probably, restricted in what I've chosen to do instrumentally, I don't even
88	have a chamber group [laughs]. Chamber music is a huge thing here as well –
89	Interviewer: OK, so playing with, erm,
90	John: Trios, quartets, quintets,
91	Interviewer: yeah
92	John: Of any variety, erm, so I've just kind of, it's not that it's not my thing. It
93	probably just isn't my thing. I really like working one to one. But lot of people do,

94	a lot of people have trios and quartets and quintets, and there's a lot of emphasis on
95	chamber music for everyone.
96	Interviewer: Yeah, that's, yeah
97	John: So, and there's one other little, tiny element to it, we've had a talk with, er,
98	the head of music in the Royal Ballet, so he came in to do a talk and we're going in to
99	observe a session there, cos they're trying to encourage the piano accompanists,
100	collaborative pianists, to maybe consider doing erm piano for dance, cos of the huge
101	shortage, as well. So they're the kind of,
102	Interviewer: OK
103	John: Probably the four different areas, if I could... But the main emphasis is on the
104	vocal accompaniment.
105	Interviewer: OK, cool. That's really interesting actually, and it relates to this topic in
106	quite an interesting way, because, one of the, sort of important issues is, erm, from
107	the point of view of this research is, sort of, what place performance has in your life
108	as a student here, erm, so that's quite interesting,
109	John: Yeah, it's everything, like... <i>[laughs]</i> . Sometimes there wasn't a week that
110	would go by where I wasn't performing in some way, whether, you know, it might
111	just be in a song class, erm, or you know, it could be an audition, like, there were
112	some weeks where I literally had three performances in a week, three or four, which
113	is, is brilliant. And I have talked to one of the other solo piano masters, one guy, and,
114	like, he's not performing that much, he's just a bit shy about it. Because we always
115	have to accompany people, we're just doing it all the time, you don't even have to
116	think about finding opportunities, like, stuff just comes swimming at you, which is
117	great. So, in terms of a performing life, I mean, the other thing is I've chosen to do
118	a masters, so there's the MPerf and the MMus, I don't know if you know about the –
119	Interviewer: So, is it about research, and, yeah?
120	John: Yeah, the MMus will have some sort of academic component to it, erm, I've
121	basically done the MPerf and even the modules I've chosen as electives, there's
122	like no academic component at all <i>[laughs]</i> , so it's literally all
123	Interviewer: OK, yeah
124	John: Performance-orientated
125	Interviewer: So, particularly for your, the way, your choices,

126	John: The way I wanted, yeah, yeah
127	Interviewer: And that's something that you wanted, yeah
128	John: Yeah, I kind of knew that, I mean, I liked academic stuff, in college, but, but
129	this, yeah, this is my focus, it's just performing, all the time <i>[laughs]</i>
130	Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, and there's lots of it
131	John: Oh there's <i>[laughs]</i> as much as you want to get, I mean, the good thing about
132	our course is, you'll have people coming to you, so you will be saying no to people,
133	'sorry I can't do that, I can't do that, I can't do that', that's a regular thing, which is
134	great that you're actually turning down performing opportunities. It could be, like,
135	recording, maybe, in the studio, it could be playing for someone's recital, but you
136	can't, you can't say yes to everything, because you would just have too much.
137	Interviewer: Sure.
138	John: So, yeah, we have so many opportunities that we actually have to turn stuff
139	down.
140	Interviewer: Wow, yeah, yeah. And you were saying just now that, er, someone you
141	were talking to on the solo course isn't really performing that much?
142	John: No, he's, I mean he's probably a bit shyer, and... that's something I suppose,
143	like they have weekly faculty classes, where they have a, a kind of, guest pianist
144	come in, and, you know, anyone can perform, you know, you sign up, and you play
145	in the class, that's all available to the solo pianists, but I guess if someone is a bit
146	reluctant or a bit shy, they might not avail of that, and they can't play every week,
147	because there's like, I don't know how many pianists there are at this college, it's a
148	lot of, a lot of them.
149	Interviewer: Yeah
150	John: Erm, and you know, so for masterclasses even, and recitals, because there's
151	such a massive pool of them, their opportunities are much lessened, whereas
152	there's only six of us, so we're always getting asked
153	Interviewer: Yeah, interesting, so, you're kind of performing more than the solo
154	performance students
155	John: Way more, yeah, in actual like, proper performing situations, I would think,
156	unless, you know, I suppose, maybe the very good ones, the people that get asked
157	to do stuff a lot will get a lot of performing opportunities but for the, if you're any

158	bit shy I'd say, it's, it's a bit difficult for them.
159	Interviewer: Yeah, OK, that's really interesting. So it sounds like, erm, for the people
160	at the top of the hierarchy as a solo performer, they might have access to more?
161	John: Yeah, yeah, but that's kind of the way it will work I suppose, in any instrument
162	in any place, like for the violinists as well, it's, I mean they do get placed in the
163	orchestral projects a lot more. It's just so much harder as a solo pianist cos you're
164	not in the, you're rarely in the orchestra, so you're gonna have to create your own
165	performing opportunities almost
166	Interviewer: Yes, and I guess there's no, they don't have a collaborative course for
167	other instruments in the same way, because presumably they can play in the
168	orchestras, is that?
169	John: Yeah, and, there is a bit of a trend starting that people are doing the solo
170	piano course, let's say the for masters, but they, you know, they will accompany
171	singers, and they'll have, they'll, you know, play in a chamber group. Erm, so we had
172	four this year who took the repetiteur module, and they also, they do a lot of
173	accompanying, they accompany singers, and they're brilliant. One of the guys won
174	two of the accompanists' awards in our internal competitions, which is interesting.
175	But I mean, he's exceptional exceptional, he's doing the Artist Diploma here next
176	year. Erm, so you do get some solo pianists who enter into our kind of world as well.
178	Interviewer: Mmm, so you see a bit of crossover, mmm
179	John: Yeah, a little bit. Not too many of them. But it's the mentality is completely
180	different, that's the, if you were to get into the whole solo piano performance
181	versus accompanist, it's a fascinating area, yeah
182	Interviewer: Well, let's talk about that, you said the word 'mentality'
183	John: Yeah
184	Interviewer: So what's the, how do you see the difference, kind of?
185	John: It's, it's a personality mentality, it's... <i>[pauses]</i> <i>[laughs]</i> it's a really sensitive
186	topic sometimes as well, because it makes you sound like you're calling the solo
187	pianists like, selfish, self-indulgent, but that's what they are doing, they're in their
188	own shoes, they're in their own head, they're expressing their views, their opinions,
189	their feelings and nothing else.
190	Interviewer: OK.

191	John: So, it is quite a self-centred thing to do. Whereas any time you play with
192	someone else, you're always having to consider the other person, you know, where
193	they're at and what they might want to do with the music, and just even
194	personality-wise, you have to be so open
195	Interviewer: In terms of the students on the different courses, sort of?
196	John: Yeah, just, just interacting, I mean, sometimes, a lot of solo pianists will be
197	criticised for just kind of staying in their room and just playing by themselves, and
198	sometimes socially not being very,
199	Interviewer: Ah
200	John: You know, kind of, that external, kind of, wanting to interact with people,
201	because, to do collaborative piano you have to want to be around people, because
202	you're always, you know, you're always rehearsing with people and you're
203	performing with people so, you have to, you have to be open to wanting to
204	communicate with people, that's the biggest difference. And I think a lot of the
205	personality types that get into solo playing, it's very much, kind of, I'll just do my
206	thing in my room, a bit.
207	Interviewer: So you said that, yeah, you said that, um, sometimes it's been said that
208	the solo students don't really mix socially either, is that, um, kind of,
209	John: Yeah, like, they won't, they won't know the singers, they won't know some of
210	the instrumentalists, cos they're just kind of very much, stuck in their own little
211	thing. And that's how some of them want it, like the guy I was talking to recently, he
212	just wants to focus on his own playing, have his lessons with his teacher. So he's not
213	playing with anyone else, which I think is really sad. But if that's what they want to
214	do, that's fine, they won't get any work <i>[laughs]</i> , probably, afterwards. You have to
215	be able to play with people. There's, there's such a small amount of options for
216	people doing solo.
217	Interviewer: That's really interesting. So you think that, actually, the skills of working
218	collaboratively are crucial for anyone who's not in that top, the top bracket?
219	John: Yeah, but most of them don't have it. And, it will be my life mission, because
220	it's my teacher's as well, to, it's kind of like, without being too like preachy about it,
221	it's kind of spreading this message of collaborative pianism. Why aren't more people
222	going into it? So the shocking thing is, next year, at the moment, there's no one
223	going to be in the first year Masters of our course.
224	

225	Interviewer: Wow, yeah.
226	John: Now that, it did really shock me, cos, I mean it shocked me that there was only
227	three people even in my year, cos in <i>[college]</i> they take in a lot more. But it's
228	shocking that there isn't people falling over each other to try and come to a college
229	like this to do a course in collaborative piano. So at the moment, we have no one
230	for next year Masters. It's worrying, because, I mean it's all connected with the
231	modern-day way of thinking, this individualism. I mean, the internet and social
232	media and all that stuff, it all comes into it. People are becoming way more
233	self-focused about their own goals, their own kind of story <i>[laughs]</i> . That makes its
234	way into their personality.
235	Interviewer: Yeah
236	John: Which doesn't, it doesn't work if you're trying to work collaboratively. So
237	there is a, there's a big problem, I think.
238	Interviewer: Yes. Can you tell me a little bit more about the problem as you see it?
239	John: The problem?
240	Interviewer: Yeah
241	John: <i>[pauses]</i> I really think it's a, cos people, for a number, a number of years, even
242	back home, people kept saying to me, you know, 'you just have this natural ability
243	and instinct to play with people', they keep saying it's a rare gift. And I keep going, 'it
244	shouldn't be a rare gift!' But, I think I'm only starting to see it now that, there's very
245	very few people who can do it, and it literally is the ability to put yourself in
246	someone else's shoes. I think that ability is being, becoming more and more rare
247	nowadays, because everybody's becoming so, self-focused
248	Interviewer: individualistic, as you were saying?
249	John: Yeah. Because I think if you looked back a couple of decades ago, society was
250	a lot less individualistic, it was more community-based, so, the type of people that
251	would have existed <i>[laughs]</i> would have been more suited to doing something like
252	what I'm doing, but I think nowadays, it's becoming so, yeah. It's interesting. <i>[laugh]</i>
253	Interviewer: Very interesting, yeah. I want to go back to something that you said
254	earlier. You were talking about, erm, sort of, how, well you were saying that you've
255	had very positive experiences of your, of the course and the conservatoire so far.
256	How, how tied up in the fact that, in the performing aspect, how does that, I'm

257	trying to form the question. How do you think that your opportunity to perform,
258	and you said performing is such an important part of what you're doing, how
259	much of that do you think is related to your kind of, the satisfaction that you find in
260	your experiences, what's the kind of, it's quite a hard question but
261	John: Yeah, I do know what you mean. I really have had moments even in the last
262	week where I was like, do you know what, this is what it's all about, it's me being
263	on this seat playing this piano with this singer to the audience, it's what it should all
264	be about, erm, and I know academic stuff is extremely important, but, even when
265	we study the history or when we're like doing analysis of things, it should all be
266	about this end goal of making music in front of people. Erm, so yeah, everything that
267	I do is directed towards, even in my lessons, like, it's never just this kind of, it's not a
268	separate thing from, this performing world, as if it's like some other dimension,
269	everything is focused on the music being performed and how you perform it. <i>[laugh]</i>
270	Interviewer: Yeah, OK, so it really is essential.
271	John: Yeah, everything is directed towards.
272	Interviewer: OK, great. Erm, I wonder if we could talk, just, if you can sort of have a
273	think about, let's just talk about some specifics, so what would be really helpful for
274	me is just to get an idea of perhaps, a time that even recently, or a time that kind of
275	comes to mind as important, a time that you have performed in college, I don't
276	know, if anything pops into your head?
277	John: Yeah, I do have one, just because it relates to an email I got yesterday and it
278	brings me back to it. So there was a <i>[composer]</i> day on the <i>[date]</i> , just a couple
279	of weeks ago, and it was going to be broadcast live, again which is an important
280	part of the <i>[college]</i> thing, is they video a lot of concerts and record a lot of
281	performances, again trying to get more people seeing the music that's happening
282	in the building. You know, sharing it globally.
283	Interviewer: Yeah
284	John: So I was just playing two songs and then a violin piece with another person,
285	erm, and it was in the, have you been in the concert hall here, the <i>[hall name]</i> ?
286	Interviewer: Yeah
287	John: So, I had played there before, before Christmas, but it was just a, three people
288	at one piano thing, it wasn't a serious thing, but this was like a proper performing

289	thing on the stage, on the big piano, you know, it was being recorded, streamed
290	live, there was a good audience there. Erm, so in some ways it kind of is almost
291	the most important performance I've had in the college since the start of the year
292	Interviewer: Great, yeah
293	John: And the other thing is, the night before, <i>[laugh]</i> I'd gone to hospital, I'd taken
294	painkillers and was on antibiotics, and I didn't think when I woke up that morning,
295	I was like, I don't think I can perform. So in another way it was almost like the
296	ultimate test, because as a performer, even if you're really sick, sometimes you have
297	to get up there and play, or else you won't get your fee and you have to earn
298	money. Luckily it wasn't the case here but I did treat it like that, I was like, in the
299	future if this happened to me, I had an earache, like, a really bad ear infection, so my
300	left ear was completely blocked
301	Interviewer: Not great
302	John: But luckily the right ear is out towards the singer and the violinist. So I just had
303	to go ahead with it and it was a bit strange at first, when I played, I was a little bit
304	disorientated, but it was fine, I mean I watched it back an hour later cos they had it
305	live on Facebook
306	Interviewer: Mmm, yeah
307	John: But yeah, it was, I think it was a really important occasion for me, cos even my,
308	I was able to tell my parents, you know, I'm going to be live at this time, and my
309	mum actually showed my grandparents, so the two of them were like, sitting there
310	watching me, on the laptop, like, they're in their late eighties, it must have been so
311	strange for them to see me performing live, from this college, you know, and she
312	was like clapping at the end <i>[both laugh]</i> as if she was there, but, like yeah, I do
313	think that was probably, because I was sick as well and because it was being
314	streamed live, erm, and it was quite a big day, I think that was probably the most
315	important performance. And it went really well, I was really happy, even watching
316	it back. I was happy, so.
317	Interviewer: Yeah OK. That's great, yeah. And kind of, as it was, you've talked about
318	kind of the specifics and that you weren't well and that must have had, I'm sure that
319	had an impact on how it felt at the time?
320	John: Oh definitely, yeah. The first piece especially, I thought, I kept losing my place
321	on the page. Now luckily I did know the piece really well, you'd barely, barely notice

322	that I did anything wrong. But it was a very simple piece, so I did like, play one or
323	two wrong things <i>[laughs]</i> , so it was a bit, but it was great to know that I can still
324	get up there and perform well, in front of an audience, being live streamed, while
325	being sick and for no one to, you know, I didn't put off the singer, she said she
326	didn't notice, yeah.
327	Interviewer: So an experience that you feel quite positively about, kind of overall?
328	John: Yeah. I think it's, in terms of the whole positive performing experiences
329	within conservatories, it's all, it's all mental work that we have to do ourselves,
330	you know, internally. And a lot of people maybe haven't done that. I started doing
331	that when I was in second year of my undergraduate.
332	Interviewer: OK, so this is interesting. Can you tell me a bit more?
333	John: Yeah, so I, I basically, I went to my head of department in my old college, kind
334	of mid-way, actually no, it was the start of second year almost, saying you know, I
335	think I'm experiencing a bit of performance anxiety, and you know, I just wanted to
336	at least tell her that, and you know, talk to someone about it. And actually, not long
337	after that I then decided to go for CBT because the college I was in offered free
338	services, so I did six or seven sessions of CBT primarily focusing on performance
339	anxiety and we took a video of me performing recently and analysed the whole
340	thing, and it was really good. It showed me, it's not as bad as I think. If you listen to
341	any person, even someone famous, they say 'um', and stutter, and have pauses,
342	it's just human. And I thought it was much worse than it was, so that was important.
343	But then I actually, I ended up, like continuing on, like just going for counselling, life
344	coaching, for another two years. And I did a lot of work and read a lot of books, and I
345	think that has contributed a lot to, I suppose, being resilient, mentally strong.
346	Knowing how to frame things in your mind, in terms of performance. So I've done a
347	lot of mental work that I think maybe a lot of people haven't done.
348	Interviewer: Yes, OK. People here, or?
349	John: Yeah, well, but even just in general, maybe even outside music.
350	Interviewer: Yeah, OK. Yes, I'm sure that's right. That's interesting. And when you
351	went for, when you went to see someone in the college before you had your CBT,
352	erm, I'm just thinking about kind of, what led you to, what led you to that in the
353	past, like thinking about,
354	John: Yeah, the past experiences. I think, it's, if you kind of, if you try and look at the

355	journey of any person here since they started playing and performing. I think when
356	you're a kid, you're just too young to really notice, or think about these things, so
357	like, I used to play for anything and for anyone and would never mind and would
358	never get nervous. You then reach that teenage stage which for me, was probably
359	about fourteen, fifteen, you know, you get that really self-conscious thing and you
360	start becoming really anxious just in general. Erm, and then you have that quite a
361	few years when you're trying to find yourself and on that kind of thing, and that,
362	that takes quite a, so, <i>[pause]</i> I'm trying to think of what age I started maybe getting
363	more anxious playing and having little, cos I used to play by memory, er, as a young
364	kid and as a young teenager, all the time.
365	Interviewer: Yeah
366	John: Without ever doubting myself and without ever like, feeling like I'm getting
367	performance anxiety. Cos your brain doesn't know what this when you're younger.
368	I'm lucky in that I don't have, I've two, probably, in my entire life, that I could point
369	out that were bad experiences, but I've completely recovered from them. One of
370	them was my, it was in that second year, it was just, that was just the worst year
371	for me in general. But I did have an exam where I was trying to play something from
372	memory and I completely blanked and stopped. Beethoven, Beethoven's first piano
373	sonata. And it was in the big auditorium and there was three people in the panel
374	and, they were fine about it, they just, you know, I think I might have just taken the
375	music out and gone from the start again. And then there was another time in a
376	sonata competition and I was playing Mozart and it was just, it all felt like it was just
377	all going wrong, and it was just nerve-wracking again. Again, I think I was trying to
378	do it by memory.
379	Interviewer: Uh huh.
380	John: So those two things, they did affect me at the time, but it was all in and
381	around that period of time, I was just really not in a good place, mentally, myself.
382	Interviewer: Generally?
383	John: Yeah. So at least I was able to identify that. So those two things did happen,
384	like, one of them would have been December and one of them would have been
385	February of that second year. So I think in and around that period I really started
386	saying OK, I have to get a hold of this.
387	Interviewer: Yeah. And you say you've done a lot of work in that regard?

388	John: Yeah. I'm always reading books about that kind of thing.
389	Interviewer: So that's an ongoing, sort of, part of your,
390	John: It's going to be a lifelong <i>[laughs]</i> , yeah. Actually I want to study psychology
391	at some point, I'm very interested in that whole area. I think as musicians you have
392	to be. There's such, such a psychological demand on,
393	Interviewer: Let's talk a bit about that.
394	John: Like, just cos you see things, like, I'm sure you're very aware of, was it Help
395	Musicians, no it wasn't Help Musicians, there's some organisation for musicians for
396	mental wellbeing or something and they were like, seventy-something percent of
397	classical musicians suffers from mental health problems, which is really, really
398	something we need to look at. We need to ask ourselves the question, if what we're
399	doing, the nature of the music and the way we do it, if it's leading to us being
400	anxious and having panic attacks and getting depression and stuff, we really need to
401	look at this whole thing. I'm sure, maybe it happens in other areas of music as well,
402	I don't know, but they don't seem to, maybe, do surveys and studies on like, in the
403	popular music world for example, I don't know.
404	Interviewer: I guess it's a different demographic.
405	John: So different. I mean there's the whole drug culture, drugs sex and rock and
406	roll. So actually I'm working with people in <i>[music school]</i> , do you know in <i>[town]</i> ?
407	Interviewer: Yeah
408	John: So I've been there a couple of times, I'm going there actually after this, er, so I
409	have been in that kind of, and there was a pop degree in our school as well back in
410	<i>[city]</i> , it's just a completely different world, it's a different persona.
411	Interviewer: Right, so different again from,
412	John: From the classical musicians thing. But it's something, it's something, yeah,
413	we need to be talking about all the time.
414	Interviewer: Yeah. You were saying earlier that there's, you feel like there's a good
415	culture around performing here in the,
416	John: I think there is in here, yeah. Erm, I mean there can never be enough of it
417	really. Erm, but it's, I think, not that they do stuff every week on performance
418	anxiety, I think the approach they have is that they're actually creating so many
419	positive performing experiences that you're almost, in some ways you don't need

420	to be talking about all these horrible experiences and all these bad performance
421	experiences. I feel just, everything in here is done with constructive criticism and
422	positivity rather than this beating down and this negativity and this tearing people
423	apart, because I don't think that helps. Some people will argue that it works, I mean
424	they do in places like Russia a bit more.
425	Interviewer: So they would have a different method of teaching than you
426	experience here, yeah?
427	John: The conservatories, cos I've talked to a guy who was in the Moscow
428	Conservatory. He told me one thing that I wouldn't even repeat <i>[laughs]</i> that they
429	have said to a student, you know?
430	Interviewer: Yeah, OK
431	John: It's kind of, like, I mean maybe it's not as bad as, but you know Whiplash, I'm
432	sure you've seen that, it's verging on abuse. Verbal abuse, I suppose. But they don't,
433	like, my teachers, they're just absolute gentlemen, and I've a woman coming from
434	Paris to teach me improvisation and they're just, the positivity and the
435	encouragement, it honestly, it's like nothing I've experienced before. And people
436	might think, you know, in a top conservatory like somewhere like this, people would
437	be so hard on you and that you'd be constantly beaten down, but they don't take
438	that approach here <i>[laughs]</i> . Which is great. It's great for me, I think it works for me.
439	Maybe some people don't think, think it doesn't work for them. They should go
440	somewhere else, go to Russia if they want <i>[laughs]</i> , you know, a harder teacher
441	who, maybe will say, horrible things to you.
442	Interviewer: Mmm, yeah. So, just picking up on something that you said just now
443	about how the fact that the college creates these positive, sort of, performing
444	experiences, you think perhaps in itself, erm, kind of reduces the need for people
445	to focus on the negative aspects, is that, sort of, on the performance anxiety
446	aspects
447	John: Yeah, but it could just be for me, because of what I'm doing, the nature of
448	what I'm doing, that, you know, the collaborative piano thing. Because I have talked
449	to, I mean, there's a harpist that I have talked to, erm, <i>[laughs]</i> and just the stuff I've
450	heard. I'm always shocked, and I feel sorry for that person that they're having that
451	experience.
452	Interviewer: In this conservatoire?

453	John: Yeah, but also, but also, outside as well. Just in the harp world, I guess.
454	Interviewer: In the field, yeah, I see.
455	John: But there's just, I don't know, there's something about the collaborative piano
456	world, and it's very small, but I've done masterclasses even with someone, you
457	know, who wasn't my teacher, he didn't know me. But again it was a positive
458	experience. But it could be just because I've done all this work mentally, I interpret
459	and I view these as positive situations, where someone else could have done the
460	very same masterclass and maybe had a bad experience.
461	Interviewer: Well, what I think it would be good to focus on actually, is, kind of,
462	it sounds, you've said, maybe, you have a specific viewpoint on it because of your
463	experiences, but let's talk about your, sort of specific experiences. Let's, let's go a bit
464	deeper. So, when you're performing, erm, what, what are you feeling? What's going
465	on for you?
466	John: Yeah. Erm... I'm really, I'm so happy at the moment with how I'm approaching
467	my performances when I'm sitting down at the stool ready to play, because, you
468	know, even a year or two, it wasn't like this, just even in the past week I've had two
469	performances, and, erm, I just feel, I do, I feel happy to be there and about to play
470	that music and to share it. And I know it sounds so, like, generic, but before it might
471	have been a, 'oh I'm really nervous and I hope I don't mess up', and you know, 'this
472	person is watching me' kind of thoughts running through your head. Because there
473	really are so many thoughts that can run through one's head in any situation.
474	Interviewer: Of course.
475	John: But, but having that psychological power, cos people underestimate, I think,
476	the power of their own mind. So when I sit down, I mean, the audition I did on
477	Saturday, it was, the head, the deputy head of the Vocal and Opera Department
478	here, it was for a song audition. So, I could have sat at that seat and been like, 'oh
479	my god, [name] is here, she's listening to me, she's going to be judging me, you
480	know, maybe I won't get an opportunity next time cos I'm gonna play badly and
481	she's gonna think I'm useless'. That's actually a choice. Maybe it's a habit, but it's
482	a choice, that one can make when you sit down. So, I've just gotten rid of all that,
483	that doesn't happen to me anymore. It's, it's, think about this beautiful music,
484	you know, you're sharing the experience with the singer, you know, just, it's just
485	about, it's just that real focus on the music. And then you're not thinking about,

486	'god this is an audition, god this person is writing down comments about me.'
487	You can't perform when those thoughts go running through your head. And I think,
488	maybe some people are at that stage a little bit, still.
489	Interviewer: People you know?
490	John: Yeah. Even the, the concert I did last Wednesday, the singer that I
491	accompanied, she'd come over from <i>[country]</i> , but, she was in the college I was in. I
492	don't think that she has had the same positive experiences. Like, even between
493	pieces, she was kind of, not really acknowledging and engaging with the
494	audience, it was kind of looking a bit to the side, and she almost kind of didn't look
495	satisfied or happy that she'd just performed, whereas I was, you have to, you have
496	to realise where you are, you know, and what you've just done <i>[laughs]</i> . You've just
497	played a piece of music to you and people are looking up at you and smiling and
498	clapping. You have to acknowledge that they're there rather than just being this very
499	kind of, inward, thing.
500	Interviewer: Do you feel like, that forms part of the performance, almost?
501	John: Yeah, but it's also the mind frame that I think you have to have, cos I usen't
502	be like that. Even when accompanying, cos I know the other person's out in the
503	front and they're more important, but still, you've taken part in a performance and
504	you have to, erm
505	Interviewer: Yeah, I guess that's another thing isn't it, the fact that as an
506	accompanist, or as a rep, kind of, you're always with someone else, but you have,
507	you've also just said, quote unquote, the other person is the more important one.
508	John: That makes it easier.
509	Interviewer: Do you think so?
510	John: Yeah. <i>[laughs]</i> Because, I had to do an assessment two weeks ago, in college.
511	And it wasn't a big deal, I mean, you know, our teacher said 'it's not a big deal,
512	don't worry about it'. But I had to play a solo piece, and the last time I played a solo
513	piece was probably September in an audition, and the time before that was
514	probably June for a consultation lesson. Before that I couldn't even tell you. So
515	I don't play solo that much, because I don't like that feeling of the attention a
516	hundred percent being on me. So when I did that exam, I did find my mind
517	wandering, and I found myself thinking, you know, it's kind of kicking into those
518	old habits of when I used to do solo stuff in college I guess. You know, those old

519	habits kicking in of, urgh, you know, one of my teachers assessing me and someone
520	else. You just get distracted.
521	Interviewer: OK.
522	John: I do, not saying every solo pianist. So I need to, be, but it, I try and explain
523	to people. You can also translate that into outside of music. I mean, for any of us
524	to, if you go into a room on your own for two hours, the way that one's mind can
525	wander and the places it can go can sometimes not be very comfortable, or you
526	know, it can go to some dark or dangerous places. Whereas when you're with a
527	friend or when you're with someone in a room, because you're engaging, you're
528	talking, the mind, you don't go inward and you don't start thinking all these things,
529	I find.
530	Interviewer: So it is something in the collaboration is kind of protecting you against,
531	yeah?
532	John: That stops me from, yeah. So that's, so I, you, you could almost make a
533	blanket statement saying, I went into collaborative piano <i>[laughing]</i> for the sake of
534	my own mental health and wellbeing.
535	Interviewer: Wow, yeah.
536	John: That, I could easily make that statement and actually say that to people. I
537	didn't, didn't enjoy playing on my own and that pressure of, you know, sitting down,
538	having 150 people just listening to you. It's quite, it's the same as if you get up to
539	do a speech on your own. No one likes doing that. Very few people like doing that.
540	Interviewer: Yeah, I think that's right.
541	John: And I always feel so much better walking up on the stage with someone,
542	cos we're sharing the burden of nervousness, of anxiety, of that focus, but you're
543	also comforted by the fact that you're making music with someone, and you help
544	each other out up there.
545	Interviewer: Yeah. And I guess sharing in the successes as well, kind of.
546	John: It's also way more rewarding. I can't imagine going and doing a solo
547	recital and then having no one to turn around to to say, 'ah that went really well' or,
548	that's why. Yeah, I don't know why so many people are still doing so much solo
549	stuff, cos I don't think music was ever intended to be played by one person... to a
550	group of people forced to endure it and listen to it. <i>[both laugh]</i>

551	Interviewer: Yeah. It's such an interesting perspective.
552	John: Yeah, but not many, I can tell you, not many people share that perspective
553	with me, and that's fair enough. Everyone has their own world view, but.
554	Interviewer: Yeah, mmm. So it seems like you sort of see, see performing solo and
555	collaboratively as really, they'd bring up quite different things.
556	John: Different lives, different mentalities, different <i>[whispers]</i> experiences.
557	Interviewer: And when you're performing, it sounds like the vast majority of what
558	you're doing here is collaborative, so that's the, and when you are kind of, if you
559	were to think about the performing that you do, when you come out of a
560	performance, do you tend to kind of think about it as, 'oh that was really good', or
561	'that was really bad', or is it more a kind of a, a spectrum of sort of, I don't know.
562	Do you kind of evaluate it in quite a black-and-white way, or in a kind of shades of
563	grey way?
564	John: That's a really good question cos I'm just thinking of Wednesday. Erm, <i>[pause]</i>
565	in general I'm probably a very analytical person and I do think very much about a lot
566	of things. So, so on Wednesday, so I was playing in the first half, and then there was
567	a piano sonata. And in the second half we were on first and then there was a cello
568	sonata. So, I stayed in the room after I'd, you know, walked down the hall and sat at
569	the back for each half. And my mind was running and I was thinking back to, you
570	know, the specific things that I wasn't fully in control of or didn't go really well.
571	Interviewer: Over your playing?
572	John: Yeah. Now, in the first half, the guy that was playing the piano, he was
573	incredible, he was like this seventeen-year-old. So I was a lot more drawn into the
574	music and not thinking so much. But even the, maybe when I got home that night
575	or the next day, probably did go over things. And it was recorded as well, this
576	concert. We're gonna get the videos and the recordings back. Which will be, again,
577	it'll be good, excuse me, a week or two later, to look at it with the more objective.
578	But certainly at the time it does happen. Unfortunately at the time it is, what didn't
579	go well, or what went wrong. And even the audition I did on Saturday was the same.
580	The first three pieces we did in the audition went, I think, really well. Then the
581	fourth piece was this really tricky thing, and, you know, she had some timing issues
582	and it threw me, because I had to try and find her and jump. And you know, it
583	made the performance a bit uneasy. Certainly that was the only thing we talked

584	about probably, when we came out afterwards. But I think it's, I've watched TED
585	talks even on this, you know there's negative news, negative press, negative
586	things, we talk more about those and focus on them more than we do positive
587	things, which is.
588	Interviewer: Yeah. So that's perhaps not surprising.
589	John: Yeah, so I think it's, maybe it's human nature just to do that. But still, I mean,
590	yeah, I can still, we still in that Wednesday concert we still went, 'wow, the, the Lizst
591	piece was definitely the best'. We both, we really felt something special during that.
592	I didn't really in the other ones, which was a bit disappointing. It wasn't just because
593	of me, you know, she'd been in hospital, was all dosed up <i>[laughs]</i> and hadn't
594	been well either.
595	Interviewer: So lots of factors.
596	John: So she wasn't even on her top, her top game either, which certainly didn't
597	help. But at least, yeah, we mentioned the piece that went really well, and I really
598	really enjoyed it. There was a moment, there were moments where I was
599	completely, completely immersed and involved in every movement, and aware
600	also that, I'm making this sound, there's this room of people listening. It was quite
601	special. And I usen't get that. A couple of years ago, probably maybe that didn't
602	happen. It's starting to happen here. That's why I'm saying that the performing
603	opportunities are now starting to be really positive.
604	Interviewer: Are actually helping, furthering your, yeah.
605	John: And my teacher, certainly, is a huge help in that, my principal teacher. He,
606	I mean he does like ninety, eighty, ninety recitals a year. He accompanies
607	incredible singers. He's playing in Wigmore Hall twice next week <i>[laughs]</i>
608	Interviewer: Wow, yeah.
609	John: Erm, so, someone who has, and our other group teacher as well. People who
610	have gotten to this level of performance, they couldn't have gotten there without
611	extreme positivity, and focusing on the good aspects of music. They couldn't be
612	there doing what they're doing otherwise.
613	Interviewer: That's interesting. Why do you think that is?
614	John: Because I do think ultimately, people can see through it. I mean, I have seen
615	pianists, let's say in my old college, who might have come to perform and it's

616	amazing and everything, but, maybe it's just because I'm very intuitive, again, with
617	the collaborative piano thing, because you're always working with people, you
618	really start to pick up and notice very small things about people. Just the way that
619	they look or the way that they bow afterwards and the look on their face.
620	Sometimes you're not convinced that they're fully happy with what they've just
621	done.
622	Interviewer: I see, so you're saying that people really do have to believe in what
623	they're doing and think about it and frame it in a positive way to succeed, to have
624	that career?
625	John: Yeah, yeah, because if they, if you actually think about it, if someone
626	communicates something negative to a group of people, <i>[laughs]</i> it's going to
627	come across. They mightn't think it is. It could be note-perfect and it could be,
628	but, you can't play out of fear. Sometimes I feel I watch people and they're almost
629	just performing, doing what their teacher has told them, and doing it because
630	they've been trained for years and years in all these conservatories.
631	Interviewer: And you might see that here?
632	John: Certainly will. And my teacher, my principal teacher, in terms of, everyone
633	who comes to him says 'wow he's amazing', but he's so, he's so intuitive and good
634	at reading people. Again, that's why he's at the top of where he is. But even in our
635	auditions, there was a person I knew from <i>[country]</i> who was in my college, who
636	came in and auditioned the year before me. And he just, he said about him, he was
637	like, 'yeah, I don't know, we just didn't really like him, we didn't feel he really had
638	anything to say.' And, you know, in terms of, which was fascinating, because this
639	kid is like, highly praised and like, everyone thinks he's amazing in <i>[country]</i> . But it's
640	interesting for my teacher to say, you know, 'he was brilliant in everything, you
641	know, polished, technically great. But, we can't explain what it is', but, whatever
642	the person is expressing in here for it to come out, it, you know, that, that goes to
643	other people. And then you feel what they're feeling, you think, almost, what
644	they're thinking. So if you're nervous, that, that basically is like, deflected out into
645	your audience and they'll feel nervous.
646	Interviewer: Yeah, and they'll pick that up.
647	John: If you're positive, if you're, if you're immersed in the music, if you're actually,
648	if you're actually expressing something rather than just going through physical

649	motions, people will, people will feel that.
650	Interviewer: Yeah, mmm. And in terms of, cos we've talked quite a bit about the
651	observer in this kind of, in the relationship of the kind of performer to audience or
652	whatever. For you, as a performer, when you kind of, you know, we've talked a
653	little bit about how you might, erm, sort of analyse once you're, analyse a
654	performance once it's over or something.
655	John: Yeah
656	Interviewer: How do you think that, kind of, the performing, and maybe, how do
657	you think the performing kind of relates to how you feel about you?
658	John: Oh that's such a good question, I love that question <i>[both laugh]</i> . <i>[pause]</i> I
659	really ultimately believe that, when someone gets up there to, to do anything,
660	whether it's, whether it's comedy or to give a speech or sing or recite poetry,
661	everything about you, everything that's going on, everything that's ever happened
662	to you comes out in that moment. I mean, if you believe in art, I think you have to
663	believe that that is true. Cos if you look at a video of me from a couple of weeks
664	ago performing and look at those ones from second year of my degree, you'll see
665	in everything, in the body language, in the position of my shoulders, in the way I'm
666	standing, in the way that I talk to the audience, you'll see where I was at in my life
667	at that time. So, I think, yeah, who you are as a person comes out. If you allow it,
668	it can, you can lay, that's why you have to be vulnerable in music, you know, just,
669	lay everything bare, and don't hold anything back and give out completely. So yeah,
670	where you are in your life and who you are as a person is everything with
671	performance.
672	Interviewer: Yeah, OK, hmm. And do you think, do you think there's a situation
673	where performing and the performance experiences that you have can influence
674	how you feel about yourself, do you think it kind of has a,
675	John: The circle, yeah
676	Interviewer: Do you think that, is that a,
677	John: Yeah, no that's true, because, again since coming over here in September,
678	once I started having all these positive experiences, because this is so important
679	to me, because you know, I've come here to do a masters and this was kind of my
680	dream and everything. Because it's so important to me, because it's going well,
681	when I have these positive performing experiences, I've been in a better place over

682	here than I ever have in my life. I'm definitely happier. And then, you know, yeah,
683	everything goes around in a circle, you know. The better and more positive the
684	performing experiences, yeah, you just kinda have this, you're just alive, and you
685	have this thing for life and then, that, when you go and practice when you feel like
686	that, it's even better. And then another good performing experience, it just, will
687	keep doing that.
688	Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.
689	John: But all the other aspects of your life are also important as well.
690	Interviewer: Yes I see.
691	John: Everything outside of music for me is just going really well as well.
692	Interviewer: Yeah, OK. So that is important in kind of, it does affect your performing
693	life, yeah?
694	John: Yeah, the best example I could give is, there was, in my old college there was,
695	a flute teacher, a friend of hers from Paris was coming over to give a piano
696	recital. And I think just that morning, it was a lunchtime recital, that morning this
697	pianist had found out, just bad news about her father, I think he'd literally just been
698	hospitalised and was very ill. And obviously when something like that happens,
699	you've a choice. Do I perform or do I pull out? She went up and she performed,
700	which is amazing, you know, that she could do that. <i>[pause]</i> Yeah. I don't know
701	where I was going with that <i>[laugh]</i>
702	Interviewer: Well I think it was kind of, it was about the idea of how what's
703	happening in your life will impact on those performances.
704	John: On your performance, yeah.
705	Interviewer: Did you see that?
706	John: A hundred percent. And, and another, my friend who plays harp, it's actually
707	the same harpist. Erm, she did an audition back in November that I was playing at,
708	and she found that morning that one of her friends had died. You know, she's only
709	in her twenties. Erm, bad time for it to ring. She went up there and she played
710	in the audition, and she ended up being one of the runners up but I swear, she
711	played these Rachmaninoff variations and I was, I <i>did</i> have tears in my eyes, and
712	my friend beside me, who doesn't even play classical music. And she was apologising
713	when she came off, she was like 'oh god I'm such an emotional wreck'. And we

714	were like, [name], it was because of that, it was so much more powerful than that,
715	it was incredible.
716	Interviewer: Wow, yeah.
717	John: We were so affected. It was absolutely stunning, beautiful. And again, it's one
718	of the most powerful things about music that these, these examples where
719	someone, and I have my own as well. I mean, I played the flute at my
720	grandmother's grave, like in front of two hundred people literally standing over it
721	before the coffin was lowered. And I played, like, literally her favourite, one of her
722	favourite tunes. I was only like eighteen. <i>[pause]</i> But yeah, I think, I suppose the
723	amazing thing is despite what might be going on in people's lives they still manage
724	to perform. But certainly they can communicate what's happening to them at that
725	present moment. And it could be, it could be something really tragic, it could be
726	bad news.
727	Interviewer: Mmm, so it's quite intimately connected, kind of,
728	John: Yeah, it can work both ways, like, you could have, you could be on an
729	absolute high and feel wonderful and perform, and you can communicate that,
730	but you can communicate the other side of it too. They're both equally valid and
731	important. But again, you wouldn't want to be going round performing with people
732	constantly dying round you all the time and having constant negative experiences
733	<i>[laughs]</i>
734	Interviewer: Yes, I see. Yeah, of course, yeah. Really interesting. I don't know if you
735	have any questions about what we've talked about or if there's anything you want
736	to kind of add, or sort of? I think we've covered quite a lot
737	John: Yeah, and it's probably very, very individual, again because of the nature of
738	what I'm doing here. I mean if you interviewed a singer, you know, they're in a
739	completely different department, they're a different personality, they're a different
740	breed, we say, the collaborative pianists. (both laugh) Or a string player, you know,
741	certainly, very different experiences.
742	Interviewer: Yes, OK, mmm.
743	John: And the other thing is, again, with the current social media era, I hope that I,
747	I'm not trying to paint everything with this kind of brush of 'everything's
745	wonderful' like people do with their Instagrams and stuff.

746	Interviewer: Yeah
747	John: I don't think I have.
748	Interviewer: No, I think we've covered quite a lot of
749	John: I've had a spell of really difficult time, from January to March, for a particular
750	recital. That was really tough. But ultimately the performance ended up working
751	out really well, it was really well-received, so it wasn't a negative experience at
752	the end of it. If you'd interviewed me two months ago <i>[laughs]</i>
753	Interviewer: We might have had a very different conversation.
754	John: The conversation could've <i>[inaudible]</i> differently
755	Interviewer: Well that in itself is interesting, then.
756	John: Yeah, you just happened to get me at a very good time, so. <i>[laughs]</i>
757	Interviewer: Yeah, but it is really interesting and obviously, a lot, yeah, a lot of
758	changes, and kind of, in your attitude, and yeah, amazing. Well I think that's
759	probably plenty.

IPA transcription of second interview

1	Interviewer: Let's get started. So, first, I was hoping you could just tell me what
2	being at conservatoire, what being at the RCM is like, kind of, what you, what
3	you do here.
4	Anna: Basically in Masters degree we have two modules. It means we have two
5	class [sic] to take. And we don't, some modules we don't have regular lessons
6	every week, so basically we are all free every day. Apart from the two modules
7	we have our major lessons, the principal study, and we have lessons every
8	week with our own professor. So we practice a lot every day
9	Interviewer: Yeah
10	Anna: in college or in college halls, so
11	Interviewer: So where you live?
12	Anna: I live in college halls, [address]
13	Interviewer: So you would practice there too?
14	Anna: Yes, but I would like to practice in college more. It feels, we have regular
15	performances every week that we need to sign up for and everybody signs up
16	so it's not very easy to get a performance, because it takes, first come first
17	Interviewer: served
18	Anna: Yeah. And we also have chamber music rehearsals with friends. It's very
19	difficult to play with other people sometimes. Yeah, we need to find people,
20	good players, it's hard to find, like someone plays, someone has the same
21	tastes with you. Yeah it's very difficult.
22	Interviewer: Mmm, so playing with other people is difficult?
23	Anna: Yeah, it's difficult.
24	Interviewer: OK. And, because people have different tastes, you say?

25	Anna: Like, if we play in a group, chamber, like piano trio group, and the
26	audience want to hear you as a group, like, blend with each other, it's hard. It's
27	very hard to do that. I, when we play in solo concerts I play with pianist from
28	college, like, professional accompanist, and they are very professional so it's
29	not as hard as if you play with friends.
30	Interviewer: OK. So it's harder to play chamber music with the other students
31	than to play as a soloist with one of the college reps?
32	Anna: Erm, not soloist, it's like college accompanist, they are like, kind of,
33	Interviewer: Like a fellow?
34	Anna: Yeah. They play, they play recital pianist [sic], which means they
35	accompany people, yeah. But if we play with friends, like, we, individually we
36	have to understand our own part and we have to discuss a lot to sometimes
37	agree with each other. It's hard.
38	Interviewer: Mmm yeah I see. And, when you play with your friends, chamber
39	music, would you have performances of those too?
40	Anna: Yeah basically, because we have two, erm, like, the college have lunch
41	hour concerts and rush hour concerts, like, three days a week and we can all
42	apply for, but the concerts are for chamber music, so, groups. But, like, cello
43	and piano duo also chamber music, so I can apply with that or piano trio.
44	Interviewer: Mhm, OK. So you can perform either solo, either in your solo
45	things on the course or in the lunchtime and rush hour concerts as a chamber
46	thing, there are opportunities for that every week?
47	Anna: Yes, that, the concerts, rush hour and lunchtime, is for chamber music
48	repertoire, yeah. They sometimes send emails for other opportunities to
49	perform our own solo recitals.
50	Interviewer: Mmm. But you say it's difficult to get a slot for your solo repertoire
51	performance?

52	Anna: Sometimes, sometimes it's hard because of the time period. Everyone is
53	free or everyone needs to perform so everyone signs up.
54	Interviewer: And when people need to perform, what, what would that be
55	for? Why would they?
56	Anna: Like, sometimes before the exam, we need to be on stage, like, several
57	times before the exam. So people will sign up at that time. Or they have their
58	own schedule, they have their own concerts so they need to perform before
59	the concerts.
60	Interviewer: Mmm. And it is helpful to be?
61	Anna: Yes, yes. Sometimes we have performance class in our own studio class
62	and we perform in front of our classmates and professor.
63	Interviewer: OK. And that's how often?
64	Anna: In my class, like twice a term. And other class, they might have once a
65	week.
66	Interviewer: OK, so could be quite a lot.
67	Anna: Because my professor is normally, he is on tour, he is very busy. But
68	some, like, most of other classes they have studio class every week.
69	Interviewer: And studio class?
70	Anna: It means we perform in front of the classmates.
71	Interviewer: Yes, OK. So you are,
72	Anna: For like, twenty minutes, and one, or several students
73	Interviewer: So it's a part of your regular
74	Anna: Yes. And we also have String Faculty performance class. It also happens
75	once or twice a term. And you perform in front of all other string players and

76	the head of the faculty.
77	Interviewer: OK. So it sounds like there are quite a lot of opportunities for
78	performance. Is that
79	Anna: Yes. But if you just don't, ignore all the emails you don't have any
80	opportunities in classes or every day.
81	Interviewer: I see. So if you, if you don't sign up, you won't
82	Anna: If you are not ready, you have no repertoire to perform, you just ignore
83	them. It's, it's also difficult to have repertoire to perform like every day.
84	Interviewer: and why is that?
85	Anna: Because it takes time to practice, to finish a piece. For me, it takes a lot
86	of time.
87	Interviewer: So people want to feel like the piece is ready before they perform
88	it in front of other people? OK.
89	Anna: Yes. And this, like the professor says you can perform and you are
90	ready with the pianist, you also have to conform with the pianist's time.
91	Interviewer: Yes, I see, so they also have to be free to play with you?
92	Anna: Yes. Sometimes it's hard to find a pianist to play with.
93	Interviewer: Yes I see. So your professor would tell you when you're ready to
94	play in front of people?
95	Anna: Like, if I finish this piece, he will say 'it's good. You can play with the
96	piano.' And that means I can find some concert to perform.
97	Interviewer: And if the professor said it's not ready yet, you wouldn't perform
98	it?
99	Anna: No, but I know it, I don't need

100	Interviewer: You'd know anyway? OK. So quite a lot of opportunity to perform
101	if you want to?
102	Anna: Yes, if I'm ready on time.
103	Interviewer: So, kind of, how important is that performing in your kind of life
104	at the RCM? Is it –
105	Anna: It's very important. Like, if I learn a piece, the ultimate goal is to perform
106	on stage. Or else, no one hears it. It's the ultimate, it's the last step of learning
107	that piece.
108	Interviewer: Yeah, OK. It's your final stage of preparing it, almost.
109	Anna: Because we study performing, and so, and also, if I don't study here, if I'm
110	not student [sic], I might not find this lot of performance opportunities by
111	myself. They find us through college, so I don't need to find, if I do it by myself
112	I cannot find such opportunities.
113	Interviewer: So, you would perform outside of college and they'd find
114	Anna: In some church, they arrange it through college.
115	Interviewer: I see. And you couldn't, it would be hard,
116	Anna: It's easier, it's easier for them to ask college for some students than, they
117	can't always come up with us.
118	Interviewer: I see. So it's easier to find, for you to get opportunities through
119	the college.
120	Anna: I didn't study in conservatoire when I was undergrad. And I didn't know,
121	like, how it works, how they find musicians to perform. I normally, I'd play in
122	orchestra more when I was undergrad, in orchestra performance. They didn't
123	arrange concert opportunities for us, so.
124	Interviewer: Mmm. So in your undergrad, you played more orchestrally?

125	Anna: Yes, because I have no chance to find somewhere to, if I wanna play
126	recital, play a recital, I have to arrange myself and it's expensive to, like, do it.
127	Interviewer: OK, I see. And what about orchestral playing at the RCM?
128	Anna: We have auditions every autumn term, and they, they give us the
129	repertoire during the next year, the orchestra might perform, and sometimes
130	I get two orchestra performances a term, sometimes I get one. Like, normally
131	we, normally we have one or two, but some people have, have no chance to
132	play in orchestra. They might get a D in the audition, I think.
133	Interviewer: A D. Is it like, grades, A B C D, kind of thing? So if you get a D,
134	you're not going to play in the orchestra?
135	Anna: No.
136	Interviewer: Right, OK. And they tell you what you get, your grade? They tell
137	you what your grade is?
138	Anna: Yeah. [inaudible]
139	Interviewer: Sounds scary. (both laugh) That's really interesting. That's really
140	interesting. So, have you performed in college recently? I know you're on
141	holiday at the moment.
142	Anna: Yes. I played in March.
143	Interviewer: And do you remember what it was, the performance?
144	Anna: It's a rush hour concert and there are, like, audience from, I don't know
145	where are they from but there are several audience
146	Interviewer: Not students?
147	Anna: No, like, people outside, they booked the ticket, although it's free, they
148	need to be booked. And we perform in, not a very big venue, so we are close
149	to the audience. We play piano trio, it's not that scary as I playing solo [sic].

150	Interviewer: Right, so playing the trio, less scary than solo playing?
151	Anna: Sometimes, because I play the cello, and cello in chamber music, it's not
152	so difficult, sometimes. Because we play Haydn, so, I only have, but my violinist,
153	I think he was very nervous, so.
154	Interviewer: In the concert?
155	Anna: Yes. And the pianist also nervous. He forgot to tune me. (both laugh)
156	Interviewer: Right. So you didn't feel that nervous, but they did?
157	Anna: No, but I feel that, I feel the feeling, like more exciting than, than usual.
158	Yeah, I feel the excitement.
159	Interviewer: And is that in a good way or a bad way, the excitement?
160	Anna: Bad, I think it's in a bad way. Because I don't need to be nervous because
161	I have like, super easy part. But I, I'm just nervous and afraid of me making
162	mistakes I've never make [sic]
163	Interviewer: Mmm, so not likely to make a mistake, but you're still worried?
164	Anna: Yeah.
165	Interviewer: And did you feel that excitement, the nervousness, in the concert
166	as well, kind of, during the concert? Before the concert?
167	Anna: Before the concert and during the break, like, when I have a break in the,
168	in the piece. And during the difficult part of other people's [sic]
169	Interviewer: So when other people have hard parts
170	Anna: Yes, they, they, I'm afraid that they are not play together [sic]. Because,
171	like, at some place I am not playing but they need to play the same notes, I'm
172	afraid that they are not in tune to each other, yeah.
173	Interviewer: OK. And you felt quite, you felt something then?

174	Anna: Yeah, I was afraid that, if we, if we were not looking at each other, we will
175	not play, like, at the same times. Because, yeah.
176	Interviewer: OK. And as well as, it sounds like it was, people were quite
178	nervous. Were there other, were there other feelings as well? Did, were there
179	good, did you feel good at any point in the performance as well? Or was it more
180	the nervousness that you felt?
181	Anna: It depends who I play with.
182	Interviewer: OK. Tell me a bit more about that.
183	Anna: When I play, I mean, in chamber music concerts, I need to feel more as
184	a group, but I didn't, like,
185	Interviewer: with this group?
186	Anna: Yes. But, when I played in orchestra performance last month, I play in,
187	like, I feel really good on stage. I can feel the sound, like, I like being in
188	orchestra. Like, in that concert I learned a piece that I've never heard before.
189	Like, new, like, twentieth century piece, it's kind of new music to the
190	audience, performing is very interesting and fun.
191	Interviewer: In the orchestra?
192	Anna: Yes.
193	Interviewer: And that was good?
194	Anna: Yes. I feel very good on stage. Very.
195	Interviewer: And so that's different from the chamber?
196	Anna: But, if I play with, like, people I like, people who are more easy, easily to
197	converse with, it might be better, because I'm not playing with that group
198	anymore. But I, because, I know, we have hard time rehearsal, yeah.
199	Interviewer: Uh huh, so the rehearsals were hard.

200	Anna: We cannot agree with each other.
201	Interviewer: I see. And then, people didn't feel very good in the concert either.
202	Anna: We have different, different (pause) tastes. We have different
203	understanding of the concert. They think it's good, but I don't think so.
204	Interviewer: Uh huh, so they, did they think it went quite well?
205	Anna: Yes.
206	Interviewer: And you didn't?
207	Anna: But I, I don't think so. But I can't tell them, because, they don't
208	understand what I think, I think.
209	Interviewer: So, you wouldn't tell them that you didn't think it was very
210	good? You wouldn't say that?
211	Anna: Erm, because, when we went off stage they, immediately they said it's
212	good, but I can't, so, yeah
213	Interviewer: And you didn't want to say 'I didn't think it was very good'? OK.
214	And then, what about, when was the last time that you played solo repertoire
215	in college? Have you done that recently?
216	Anna: In college? Uh, December?
217	Interviewer: Hmm, and, well, we're in April. And do people, do people go for
218	a long time between playing solo in the classes, so could you wait for four
219	months or something, do people do that a lot, kind of wait?
220	Anna: Wait?
221	Interviewer: To play in the solo classes. Does that make sense?
223	Anna: Um, what, what do you mean?
224	Interviewer: So, last time you played, December, and then, haven't played for,

225	January February March, a few months. Is that normal for people?
226	Anna: Erm (pause)
227	Interviewer: Do some people play more often, or? It depends?
228	Anna: You mean in class?
229	Interviewer: In the solo repertoire slots for class, yeah, kind of performing to the
230	class
231	Anna: To the class or to the public?
232	Interviewer: Either, actually.
233	Anna: Erm, I, some people have their own company, erm, there are some, like,
234	concert pianists, concert soloists in college, I think they have, they have many
235	concerts. And some doesn't, don't. And I think it's normal, but not everyone.
236	Interviewer: Yes, OK. And when you played, when you last played as a solo,
237	solo repertoire in college, performed it. What was that like? What does it feel
238	like to do those performances?
239	Anna: Last time, I didn't feel nervous at all, because I practised a lot. Basically
240	I practised the repertoire, like, for, only for the repertoire for like two weeks.
241	Interviewer: Just that repertoire?
242	Anna: So I didn't feel nervous at all.
243	Interviewer: So practising lots helps not to feel nervous?
244	Anna: Because that piece, I think, that piece I've practised well. But it depends
245	on, sometimes I practice a lot and still feel nervous. I think it depends on the
246	piece.
247	Interviewer: Right, OK. So with some pieces you might practice them lots but
248	you would feel nervous in a performance of it anyway?

249	Anna: Yes.
250	Interviewer: And what is it about those pieces, do you think, that means that
251	you still get nervous? Are they different from –
252	Anna: Sometimes, some pieces are hard, are more difficult than others.
253	Interviewer: So when you play, when you played in December, erm, you said
254	you weren't nervous. What were you feeling while you were playing, do you
255	think?
256	Anna: When I'm playing, while I'm playing?
257	Interviewer: I know it's a long time ago.
258	Anna: Er, I thought of just what I'm playing. Just, like, what I'm gonna do with
259	my right hand and left hand. And, yeah, one sound, and one here and one here.
260	Interviewer: So just focusing on the technique, and the
261	Anna: Because, like, if I want to, I want to express any emotion, I, I can only
262	do it with my left hand and right hand. It's, it's not helping if you think like too,
263	emotionally. It's only, like, it's only left hand and right hand, you can make the
264	sounds. So it's more easy, I think. Because, even you think [sic] very fancy ideas
265	in your mind, you still need your hands for that. So I've already done this,
266	like, three weeks ago. I have to decide, like, not on stage. On stage, like, it's, it
267	has to be done, like one month before the concerts. Everything.
268	Interviewer: Every?
269	Anna: Every ideas [sic].
270	Interviewer: OK.
271	Anna: So that I can think of nothing [inaudible]
272	Interviewer: Yes, OK. So ideas about the music, or? So at the time that you're
273	playing, you're just focusing on the playing?

274	Anna: I, I can just play it, because I've practised everything, they will do it
275	themselves [sic]
276	Interviewer: And then it's left hand, right hand. OK. Interesting. So when you
277	play, you're not really thinking about the emotion?
278	Anna: I don't think it but I can feel it. I've practised it in, into the motion,
279	physically.
280	Interviewer: You've prepared a few weeks before, kind of thing. Yeah, OK.
281	Interesting, yeah, that's really cool. And, so then, after that, when the piece
282	is done, when you've finished the performance, what does that feel like then?
283	Do you think differently?
284	Anna: I know, I know, I knew that I did everything I wanted. I knew it.
285	Interviewer: And what did that make you feel like?
286	Anna: Relaxed.
287	Interviewer: Relaxed, OK, yeah. Interesting. So, I see.
288	Anna: Because sometimes a piece I know I've done the best of my, sometimes
289	I, I don't feel that, so I get nervous. So sometimes I, I know I've done the best
290	Interviewer: And then you feel quite relaxed. And, if you played and you felt
291	like it didn't go how you wanted, what does that feel like afterwards?
292	Anna: On stage?
293	Interviewer: Yeah, and then
294	Anna: Afterwards
295	Interviewer: Either.
296	Anna: I try to forget it as fast as I can.
297	Interviewer: As soon as possible, yeah. So just, put it out of your mind.

298	Anna: I, next time I practice I know I, I don't want that feeling anymore so I
299	prepare it.
300	Interviewer: Mmm, yeah. It's interesting, so it sounds like that playing solo,
301	playing chamber group, playing in the orchestra, quite different feelings, or
302	quite different experiences, maybe?
303	Anna: Yes.
304	Interviewer: I don't know if you have any more thoughts on that, whether, it
305	seems like they sound quite different to me?
306	Anna: Mmm, yes. But, because I haven't played in, as a principal cellist in
307	orchestra in college, so if I play as principal cellist I might be nervous too.
308	Because I have to lead the section, yes. Sometimes, because I, sometimes
309	in orchestra I follow the principal cellist, so that's why I am relaxed. But if I
310	need to lead the whole section I might be nervous too.
311	Interviewer: Mmm, I see yeah. And, is it, why is that, why are people more
312	nervous, why would you be more nervous leading than watching someone else?
313	Anna: If I make mistake the whole section make mistake [sic]
314	Interviewer: Right
315	Anna: And the cellos, like, we are, we might not in [sic] the right place, and the
316	audience will know. And this other players [sic] knows, know.
317	Interviewer: Mmm, so the audience know, and the other people in the
318	orchestra will know too.
319	Anna: And, and, they, they, it makes the conductor panic, I think.
320	Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, OK (laugh). So, I know you said that, when you play,
321	sometimes you feel like you've done everything that you wanted to do and
322	sometimes you know that,
323	Anna: Sometimes I just hope for miracles. (both laugh)

324	Interviewer: And when you have finished playing, erm, do you think, do you
325	tend to, do you think about the performance and think, oh, it was either, 'really
326	good', or 'really bad', or do you think more, 'some bits were good, some bits
327	were bad'?
328	Anna: I think, if, I think either very, very good and not very good. Because if
329	I have one piece, like, ready, like, the whole piece is ready.
330	Interviewer: Yeah. OK. So it's either, works and it's good, or
331	Anna: Not good.
332	Interviewer: Not good. OK.
333	Anna: Sometimes we have recording sessions, like, I record my solo piece,
334	and it, it's like, concerts also. Because, when I record a piece I cannot make
335	any mistakes in one take. It feels like a performance also when we record. We
336	need, we need quite a lot of recordings for our own piece, because we apply
337	for like, music festivals, we need that recording.
338	Interviewer: I see.
339	Anna: So it's also like a performance.
340	Interviewer: Yes, I see. So, recordings are important for getting other concerts
341	and things, and to have a recording that's good, you need to play it all
342	through with no mistakes?
343	Anna: That's, yes, and sometimes, like, I once recorded a piece I played eight
344	times
345	Interviewer: To record?
346	Anna: Yes. Completely, eight times.
347	Interviewer: To get it perfect? That's a lot, isn't it?
348	Anna: Yeah.

349	Interviewer: OK. Erm, that's interesting, so making a recording, you almost,
350	you do perform the piece, because it has to be, you want it to be perfect.
351	Anna: And, sometimes we, film the, film the
352	Interviewer: Video
353	Anna: Video, yeah, so we have to dress like we are in a concert, yeah.
354	Interviewer: Just to do a recording.
355	Anna: And we record in a concert venue.
356	Interviewer: In the college?
357	Anna: Yes, like a big room.
358	Interviewer: OK. And how often do you do that, do people do that a lot?
359	Anna: Like, maybe once a term. If I need to, if I need to apply something [sic]
360	Interviewer: Yes, OK. And, yes, so quite a lot of performing. Are there any
361	performances you've done that kind of, really stick in your mind as being, like,
362	important?
363	Anna: Important?
364	Interviewer: Yeah, or kind of, that you remember
365	Anna: I think every solo performance.
366	Interviewer: They kind of stay in your mind, yeah. OK. Is there one, is there any
367	one time that you really think might have been very important, that it was very
368	Anna: There's one time I play with, with cello quartet. They accompany me.
369	They play like, as orchestra, but in cello quartet version, and I play with them.
370	So it's kind of, more like me play with orchestra than with piano.
371	Interviewer: Yes, and, so you, the cellist, solo cellist, and what other
372	instruments?

373	Anna: Four cellists.
374	Interviewer: Four, oh right, a quartet of cellos accompanying you?
375	Anna: Yes, yeah.
376	Interviewer: And that sticks in your mind, why?
377	Anna: Because, the sounds are very, because the piece was, is originally played
378	with piano, and I play with four cellos and it sounds like I play with an
379	orchestra.
380	Interviewer: Mmm. And how did that feel?
381	Anna: It felt very good.
382	Interviewer: Yeah? OK. Cool. And, so, it was, more like playing with orchestra
383	than with just piano?
384	Anna: Yes, different sound, different feeling, stronger.
385	Interviewer: Yeah OK. And did you, who did you perform for?
386	Anna: Er, performance class.
387	Interviewer: In college?
388	Anna: Yeah for other string players.
389	Interviewer: So how did the, oh, string faculty class.
390	Anna: Yeah.
391	Interviewer: And, yeah, so, yeah, it sounds, what did it feel like to do that
392	concert, kind of, while you were playing? Did you think about, what were you
393	thinking about?
394	Anna: I think, because I was thinking, because I, because we all are cellists but I
395	play the solo so I need to sound different than other four so I play extra loud
396	and I put extra effort to sound more differently than other cellists. And

397	sometimes we have the same melody, and I try to make my own sound, so that I
398	don't be much in the other cello sound.
399	Interviewer: Because you were the soloist?
400	Anna: Yes.
401	Interviewer: So it's important to have, to sound different from
402	Anna: I, yeah, but, if I, I am not sounding like, I don't my own sound, they
403	might think it's a cello quintet or something.
404	Interviewer: Yes, OK. So it's important to be separate from the –
405	Anna: That's what I wanted.
406	Interviewer: And do you think, do you think that worked? Did you, do you feel
407	Anna: Yes.
408	Interviewer: So when you came off stage, when you were finished, what, what
409	was that like? After it was done?
410	Anna: I know I played it better than the others (laugh). Like, I, because we have
411	some melodies, we have the same melodies in the piece, like, they play once
412	and I play once, so I know I play well [inaudible]
413	Interviewer: And was that, that's good? How did that feel?
414	Anna: Because I've practised that I know what should I do [sic], like
415	Interviewer: Mmm. Yes I see, so you had practised a lot?
416	Anna: Yes, the piece.
417	Interviewer: And that made you?
418	Anna: I know I will do it, because it, it takes time, it takes a lot of time to reach
419	what I am expecting, so I know, I know I did, because I've heard the sound, I
420	know. I think it's (pause)

421	Interviewer: Mmm. So, you say it takes a lot of time to reach what you
422	expected. Do you mean the, er, standard, the quality that you wanted, or?
423	Anna: The sound.
424	Interviewer: The sound, right. So it took you a long time to get the sound you
425	wanted?
426	Anna: I know, because I knew it takes time to, to make the sound I wanted. And
427	I think other, like, the other cellists playing in the quartet, they didn't practice
428	a lot, like I do, because, they, they just got the part two weeks ago. So yeah.
429	And they know they are gonna accompany me, they might not practice a lot.
430	Interviewer: Why do you think that is?
431	Anna: Because they are just accompanying me. Like, when we play orchestra
432	or accompanying part we don't practice much. We just sight read (laugh). I
433	know they might be sight reading, so, I know they can't make the sound I make,
434	cos I practice a lot.
435	Interviewer: Yeah, so people practice less for things where they're not the
436	soloist?
437	Anna: Yes.
438	Interviewer: Right, yeah OK. Er, hmm. And, yeah that's interesting. Erm, have
439	you, and that, so that was significant, that performance was important?
440	Anna: That's my first time perform [sic] on stage in England, because I, I was
441	not here
442	Interviewer: For your undergrad?
443	Anna: Yeah.
444	Interviewer: Ah, so that was your first performance here?
445	Anna: Solo performance.

446	Interviewer: So quite memorable, hmm. And, have there been any other
447	concerts you've done or performances you've done that are memorable as
448	well? Any other different kind of –
449	Anna: Concerts?
450	Interviewer: Yeah. I know you said every solo performance is quite memorable.
451	Anna: Yeah I don't have solo performance last term but I will have in next term,
452	yes. I play in orchestra last term, in a concert for kids, like, [inaudible] concert.
453	And I find it, because we don't have this kind of concert in my home town. Like,
454	children are not allowed in concert hall.
455	Interviewer: Ah.
456	Anna: Yeah. But like, college, they arrange repertoire especially for kids. And
457	like, every elementary, they are only seven-year-old kids and they know the
458	piece very well and they know the composer, and they can sing along when we
459	play in orchestra so I think it's very, it's very amazing because we don't have this
460	in [country].
461	Interviewer: Yeah, OK, that's interesting too, that's a different, different thing,
462	mmm. So that's quite a different, that's very different from a solo performance
463	with a pianist.
464	Anna: Erm, I'm not sure if it's normal in, it's normal here, every kids [sic] have
465	opportunities to go to concerts and learn, learn about the composer
466	Interviewer: Sometimes. Yeah, I think in cities, in the cities, maybe. Hmm, OK.
467	And then, I'm just thinking a little bit about these performances and things.
468	When you have a really good concert and you said everything goes the way
469	you want it to, and you come off and you feel kind of relaxed, how, how does
470	performing kind of, make you think about yourself? Do you think about, does
471	that, does that make sense as a question? How, how does a performance kind
472	of make you feel about you? Do you ever think about that?

473	Anna: How, how?
474	Interviewer: Do you need me to explain?
475	Anna: Yes (laugh)
476	Interviewer: Do you think that performing a lot changes how you think about
477	yourself in some way?
478	Anna: After the concert, I think different, but, like, when I was, only, it doesn't
479	last, the feeling doesn't last forever, just like, after the concert, like two days,
480	three days.
481	Interviewer: OK. So for a few days after the concert. And how does it change?
482	Anna: Mmm, I might be more positive [inaudible] the concert, after
483	Interviewer: So you would feel more positive in yourself if you did a really
484	good concert?
485	Anna: If, if we have a, like, yeah. Not really good but, if the concert is nice.
486	Interviewer: Then you would feel good for a few days afterwards about it?
487	Anna: About life.
488	Interviewer: About everything! Yeah OK. That's really interesting. And if you
489	did a concert that wasn't so good, would you feel more negative about life?
490	Anna: Mmm, I feel the same as usual.
491	Interviewer: Right, OK, hmm.
492	Anna: Erm, I might practice more (both laugh)
493	Interviewer: OK. So if you do a concert that's not so good?
494	Anna: If it's not so good I will practice more but if it's, it is good I will still
495	practice more. Like, but, in, like, if it's not so good I feel I need to practice more.
496	And if it is so good I feel I can, like, I can do better so I still practice more.

497	Interviewer: So even if the concert's really good, it might inspire you to, to play
498	more, yeah, that's interesting. But you said that the feeling doesn't last, the
499	feeling of those concerts doesn't last?
500	Anna: No. Less than one week.
501	Interviewer: Yeah, OK, hmm. Yeah, really interesting. OK, I'm just going to check
502	that I've kind of covered everything I wanted us to cover. I think we've got
503	everything we need. Thank you. Do you have any questions for me?
504	Anna: Erm, no.

IPA transcription of third interview

1	Interviewer: OK cool. We've talked about, you've seen my email about the sort of
2	point of this study, is to ask conservatoire students about their experiences of
3	performing, sort of, in conservatoire. So I thought we'd start just by talking really
4	generally, maybe you could tell me, tell me what it's like to study at the RCM.
5	Lily: Erm, so, I mean, to study in an institution like RCM, like when you first come it
6	feels a bit daunting, erm, because it's just like everything is just so royal <i>[both laugh]</i> .
7	Like you kind of feel there's, there is a certain standard you have to meet, and this
8	pressure that you kind of have to meet. There's always this underlying feeling of a little
9	pressure that, that you have to meet certain standards. But then, that's, at least for me,
10	because I was here last, so this is my first year Masters, but I was here last year,
11	because in RCM there's a research course, Masters in Performance Science, so I did
12	my research project as well. Erm, so for me I had this first experience of being in RCM
13	as a psychology researcher instead of as a performer, which gave me like this getting
14	inside of RCM without that pressure, actually. So now, this year that I'm studying as
15	a performer, I kind of already knew everything. So I was more, I was just more relaxed
16	about how to get, like about getting into RCM. And, and then your day-to-day, at least
17	for pianists, it's pretty relaxed in a way. You've just got to do your own practice and
18	then you've got some one-to-one piano lessons which for me are the most, kind of
19	the important part. But yeah, more or less, erm
20	Interviewer: So you're saying that one-to-one lessons are the most important part
21	for you?
22	Lily: Yeah exactly, like, I used to get really nervous, well I still do, when I have my
23	one-to-one lessons, and the week kind of just focuses on being prepared for that
24	lesson. And I actually get really nervous before them, because I feel I should have
25	practised more or I'm not prepared for the lesson or the teacher's gonna just get, get
26	myself out of the lesson, you know. These kind of thoughts come into my mind
27	sometimes. But then usually they go well, I mean, they are just learning experiences in
28	the end, which is great. But, but yeah, for me I feel this, this kind of constant

29	pressure I was talking about of, you always have to meet certain standards, and
30	some weeks you just don't, and you feel crap because of that <i>[both laugh]</i> . But, but I
31	mean, you learn how to manage that as well.
32	Interviewer: Where do you think that pressure comes from?
33	Lily: Well, it's a mixture between the world of classical music, which, you get all these
34	like amazing recordings and amazing performers, there's a culture round it where,
35	you kind of have to be perfect in a way. And then also probably these experiences of
36	previous teachers. So I'm from Spain and I did my undergrad there, and I had a really
37	strict teacher, so that kind of hounds me now, it follows me a bit. And it's changed a
38	lot since I'm here because she was from the Russian school which is really strict, and,
39	erm, well the lessons were, I was really scared of going to the lessons and I usually cried
40	in the lessons and things like that. While here, well I still am scared sometimes about
41	the lessons, then usually they are pretty relaxed in a sense that you learn, and you
42	have to work in the lessons but it's not a scary experience at all. So that's kind of
43	changing bit by bit, my, my perspective of the experiences. But yeah, it's still a bit of
44	this classical music environment around it, which you, you know, have to be, I don't
45	know. It's about this meeting certain standards musically, which, which sometimes,
46	it's difficult. You just need practice and time, and yeah.
47	Interviewer: So as well as your one-on-one lessons, what else, what else makes up
48	your week here, what else would you do here?
49	Lily: Erm I have Alexander Technique, I just came from there, and it's actually great.
50	It's about, it talks about posture, how to manage, erm, thoughts. It's kind of a, yeah,
51	it's a great subject just to, just to get awareness about your body use when you play
52	the instrument. And we have that once a week, and we have to do some assignments
53	for that. And then I also have improvisation, which is, it's great. Yeah, it's fun, I mean.
54	And then there is also some yoga during the week which you can join. But that's
55	basically it for the Masters. Like in the undergrad you get a lot of theoretical subjects,
56	but when you're in your masters it's more about your playing than anything else.
57	Interviewer: OK. So, because, so, one-on-one, sounds like a lot of one-on-one classes.

58	Erm, so what, in terms of kind of performing while you're here, does that, play a role,
59	are there any contexts in which you would perform here as part of your studies?
60	Lily: Yeah, I mean, there is, the Creative Careers centre offer you opportunities to play
61	and I've auditioned for like, getaway, getaway opportunities I think it's called,
62	something like that, where they just offer you concerts and opportunities to play. And
63	I've played a few times in the Parry Rooms and then they offered me to play during
64	the week in a church. So you get these, like, opportunities from time to time. I mean,
65	yeah, that's the thing in the end. You kind of prepare for that, and then your final
66	recital, which you have to do, which is like the most important, what you've been
67	preparing for the whole year. Erm, and yeah the whole year is just helping you to
68	prepare for this kind of situation, of performing. The recital is in front of a jury, and
69	then, which is scary, but at the same time I try not to think about that, because it's an
70	exam, but I try to just, erm, think about it as a concert. And there's a difference in that,
71	because if you think as a concert, you just think about the music reaching an audience
72	and you're just hoping for them to like it and enjoy it. While if you think it's an exam
73	you just focus on the things that go wrong or the little details, which is, in the end
74	you don't enjoy it and the public doesn't enjoy it, I think, if you're focusing on that. So
75	I just try and think that the jury is part of the audience and I hope they enjoy it as
76	well, you know <i>[both laugh]</i> . They will get critical of course, but. Then the lunchtime
77	concerts we do and stuff, I mean, you get nervous, like, during the year, I got really
78	nervous for that and they're insignificant concerts in terms of, if they go wrong it's not
79	the end of the world, like, it's just, OK, you have to keep working. But you always put
80	yourself on the spot, and that's always difficult to do. So I've done a few and I always
81	thought, 'why've I done that, I'm not prepared, I should just keep practising'. But then
82	it's good to put yourself in that kind of pressure to just, even though you feel it's not
83	prepared, to perform.
84	Interviewer: You think that's good?
85	Lily: I think it's good to do it in a way, because then it goes, sometimes it goes better
86	than you think, or like, or even though if it doesn't go better than you think, you

87	realise which bits you have to keep working on the piece or how you can improve
88	certain aspects of the performance, erm, so I think, yeah. It's really important to get
89	to perform during the year even though it's in front of family or friends, or yeah.
90	Interviewer: Yeah. It's like, so, what you're saying, it's almost like, performing in those
91	kind of concerts, even where it doesn't matter if it goes wrong, you're still learning if it
92	does go wrong?
93	Lily: Exactly, exactly. I mean, it does matter if I go wrong, I, yeah. Luckily, not like any
94	concert has gone really wrong, but, but yeah [laughs]. It's like, well, this Masters is
95	focusing on performance in the end, so if you don't get to perform, what are you
96	preparing for, you know? It's this kind of thing, so yeah. I think it's always a learning,
97	everything's a learning experience, and yeah. We have these, we started later in the
98	year but we've done this piano club, which all the piano students just get together
99	one, once every two weeks or once every week and just perform, even though it's not
100	prepared, or just anything you want to perform, and that's been really really helpful
101	for me. Because sometimes it's really easy for a pianist to get stuck in just a practice
102	room and it's a lonely thing as well. So, that's been really helpful, just, what you're
103	doing, put it out, and then the other people are students as well so they know what
104	are you getting through and they know how you feel in a way, so they just give
105	constructive comments and what you can improve, and that's, that's great, like I think
106	that's one of the best things, it's happened, just in terms of giving you confidence to
107	just keep working, and kind of feedback of how you are doing.
108	Interviewer: So, sort of, performing for people who are in the same position as you is
109	nice?
110	Lily: Yeah, exactly. In the beginning I was, the first one, because I didn't know all of
111	them very much, I was like, 'oh gosh', you feel the pressure of, I don't wanna, at the
112	beginning I was like, 'oh I don't wanna play, what are they gonna think? Maybe it's too
113	bad and they're gonna think I should play better'. All these things. But once you do it,
114	then, at least in this case, they've been just great and they just give good comments
115	and constructive, or what you can improve. And then you see all of your colleagues

116	performing and some of them go wrong, so, you just kind of give this motivation to
117	the person to keep going, because, it's just a matter of keep working, yeah. Sometimes
118	we tend to think about this all or nothing, like if it goes wrong you're crap, if it goes
119	well you're amazing. So it's good to kind of get rid of this thinking and just see it as a
120	progress.
121	Interviewer: Yeah, that's really interesting, the idea that it's, quite binary, that it's like
122	either 'that was great' or 'that was really terrible'
123	Lily: Yeah, yeah. Exactly, yeah.
124	Interviewer: Is that, when you perform, is that, is it?
125	Lily: You get that thinking when you perform. It's like when I did my recital and
126	something goes wrong, it's like, for you it's the end of the world. Then you learn to
127	manage that. So while in my recital some little things went not as I expected, you can
128	not get caught up on those things. But yeah, sometimes, it happened to me in previous
129	concerts and performances, just things don't go as you expect and you just start to
130	think, this is going terrible, you kind of get in this negative cycle of thinking. And then
131	you go out and people are, 'oh that's great, it's sounding great' and you're like, 'so
132	why did I not enjoy it at all?' <i>[laughs]</i> So that's a, I mean, I had that since I was little,
133	which, it's been a bit of a struggle sometimes, it's just, performing, not enjoying it at
134	all because you think all the things don't, you think about all the things that don't go
135	as you wanted, and you get caught up on that so you've, it kind of drags you into this,
136	'oh this is not going great, they're not going to like it, what a disaster'. But then you go
137	out and the audience is like, 'wow, that's been great'. So there is like a mismatch on
138	what you've played, or what you feel you've played, and what they heard. So through
139	experience you learn to just accept. And also because, when now I listen to concerts I
140	think, 'OK, why am I liking this?' and then if I go to talk to a performer why is he or
141	she gonna tell me they didn't enjoy it or they didn't like it? So I try to put myself in that,
142	in the audience situation. And just you realise that the human ear is limited. And when
143	you hear something for the first time it's a lot of information so you can just get, gather
144	the general thing. While if you're the performer you've listened to that piece for a

145	hundred, a thousand times while you perform. And you pick every detail, but the
146	audience not, so you kind of learn, learn to put that analytical and critical thinking
147	aside, and try to accept that mistakes happen and maybe the audience don't realise
148	and it's gonna sound great anyway. This acceptance, it's not being, like, it's not playing
149	something that doesn't sound good and thinking 'oh that's amazing', it's not that, but
150	being a bit flexible in your thinking in that sense. And I think that comes through
151	experience, like when you're a teenager, or yeah, everything is more black or white.
152	Interviewer: Right.
153	Lily: And now, I mean I'm still young but, it feels, I'm learning to manage more, and
154	enjoy even though things don't go as you expect, yeah.
155	Interviewer: Yeah, OK. Yeah, it's really interesting, what you're saying about the idea
156	that, because you are so much more, as the performer you're so familiar with the piece
157	you pick out the,
158	Lily: Everything.
159	Interviewer: The kind of, yeah, the things that are not as you would want, the details,
160	the tiny details
161	Lily: Yeah. It's like even one note, that you wanted to play that way and it sounds
162	that way, and you're like, 'oh crap'. But then, you know, it's not, it's not the only thing
163	that matters in the end. It's more about the communication and what you get the
164	audience to feel, and what you feel as well.
165	Interviewer: What you're feeling?
166	Lily: Yeah, yeah. So I think enjoying while you perform is something that you learn
167	during, with experience, yeah. Which is, it's interesting in a way, like. But when you
168	put yourself on the spot, sometimes you get really self-conscious and your music,
169	what you're playing, you feel everyone is picking all the details. Because you're just
170	playing that, so you feel everyone is picking everything you play. That's, that's what
171	you learn to kind of manage, and put yourself in the audience while you are playing,

172	just learn to enjoy what's coming out of the instrument.
173	Interviewer: Yeah. And when you're, when you perform now, with all that kind of
174	knowledge behind you, that experience, do you find that you can enjoy your playing?
175	Lily: Yeah, and it gives you more resilience as well. Because if you're caught up in this
176	negative thinking you get really tired, and sometimes you're just kind of 'OK I'm done',
178	maybe you still have half an hour to play. While if you, even though things happen as
179	you didn't expect, if you learn, if you enjoy it, it's just like 'OK, just keep going and try
180	and enjoy the next bit', and you just get more resilient and it's easier to get through
181	the end of the one hour recital you've gotta play. [laughs] Yeah that's the thing about
182	here.
183	Interviewer: You can hear everything, can't you?
184	Lily: [laughs] Yeah.
185	Interviewer: So just thinking about these experiences of kind of performing for the
186	audience and everything, are there any times that you've performed that kind of
187	stick in your head as significant in some way? Is there anything that for any reason
188	you think is kind of, has been an important performance for you?
189	Lily: Yeah. There's been a few. The first one, when I was, I was eleven I think. Yeah, I
190	was eleven years old or something like that. Erm, well, and I performed, it was like a
191	competition to play with orchestra and I performed with my teacher. And that was
192	really important because for me I was like, one of the youngest in my conservatoire
193	and a lot of people were competing in that. So for me, I mean I was really young, and,
194	I performed with my teacher, with my piano teacher, and she was doing the orchestral
195	part. So for me I was like, I don't know, a great experience. I was really nervous for
196	that, I remember. And then I remember just getting into the stage and we had to move
197	the pianos because they didn't, the people who arranged the stage didn't do it well
198	so we kind of had to do it ourselves before playing. I remember that just made me
199	calm. And then I remember that performance as one of the best. I was just like
200	engaging with my teacher, I was super in the zone. And then I won the competition,

201	it was like, 'wow'. But yeah, and that, that was one of the greatest, and it was just, I
202	was just so engaged on the music, and I remember it was really fun, and also there
203	were really good moments with my teacher as well. And then I kind of, I compare that
204	to my final recital in my undergrad, which I remember I didn't enjoy at all, like. I mean
205	I was really tense at that moment, I was, it's your last year of your undergrad, you
206	know what you wanna do. I had this Russian teacher who was really strict, everything
207	was kind of difficult. So I managed to get through it, and I remember getting down the
208	stage and thinking 'oh my god that's been awful', and then my friends and my family
209	were all crying <i>[laughs]</i> . And like, everyone started to say 'oh that's been', everyone
210	was crying, like, they've just enjoyed it so much. And I was really impressed. Then you
211	get happy because you see their reaction and you kind of forget about your bad
212	experience. But I was thinking about that because, yeah, at that moment I was like,
213	'I don't want to keep doing this because I'm not enjoying it', but then you see the
214	audience, and it's, so it's, it's this kind of mismatch which compared to when I was
215	little, it didn't happen. So I suppose that comes also through, you're more conscious,
216	more analytical, and there is a pressure from your teachers, well you get to, you wanna
217	do things right and you want it to go well. So when it starts to not go well, you just,
218	erm. So these two experiences, I would say, like one compared to each other, they're
219	completely different. And the reaction was kind of the same from the audience but
220	my experience was completely different. And then, since then, I mean then after that
221	I went to the performance science Masters to get a break from it. But now that I'm
223	coming back to performance and I've performed a few times, for example my final
224	recital from this year. I've seen the difference in terms of, you still don't enjoy it as
225	much as an audience member, but, yeah, you learn to accept, to accept what's going
226	on, what's happening, and kind of enjoy it as well. Kind of let yourself go and get
227	into a zone of trying to communicate more than, more than thinking about what's
228	going wrong or well, so yeah.
229	Interviewer: Yeah, it's just, it's really interesting to think about those two together,
230	isn't it? And how you say the audience reaction was the same, and yet your experience
231	was so different.

232	Lily: Yeah, exactly. I suppose, like, you become more conscious when you're more
233	an adult, and more analytical, and you have other standards. But then, I think what
234	you've got to try is just go back to that, when you were a child feeling, you know, and
235	just get into the music, communicate, get the feeling and the energy to perform, and
236	things are going to happen but just keep trying to communicate and get in, and yeah,
237	get into the flow of the music more than the analytical part.
238	Interviewer: This idea of kind of, the standards and everything, of the world, it sounds
239	quite, erm, it sounds like it's quite a strong presence?
240	Lily: Yeah, it is. Because, I don't know why. It's just, it feels like, all these great
241	composers, Beethoven, Chopin, you just cannot play, like, you cannot do it cheaply,
242	you know? It's like, there's this feeling of, it's such great music, if you're going to
243	perform it, it's not like you're performing, with all respect, I like that music, pop music,
244	you know. You need certain preparation. I mean, I think that's a good way of thinking,
245	in a way, that it makes you, it makes you be careful just in terms of just not playing
246	anything in any way, but trying to be conscious about what you're doing and how
247	you're doing it. But at the same time you have to be careful that thinking doesn't
248	get too into you too much. It's like when you do, I don't know, when you're studying
249	a science or, well anything. You want to do things well, you don't want to just do it and,
250	'that's it, it's alright'. But at the same time if you get too obsessed about getting it right
251	and perfect, in the end it just feels unnatural. So in the end you've got to think that
252	even the great composers that now we rate as the geniuses of our time, of their time,
253	most of them were just improvising, or just playing what they felt. I don't think they
254	thought there was going to be conservatoires of people just playing their music to just
255	maintain it alive. So in the end you've got to try and, yeah, get into that sense of, they
256	were humans as well, and yeah. They were just, they worked on their music, and that's,
257	they created great works, er, but yeah. Yeah. I don't know. I mean, there's always, from
258	teachers, and, because lessons are one-to-one and you can focus on a lot of details.
259	Interviewer: Is that what you would tend to do in your one-to-one lessons, kind of
260	detailed work?

261	Lily: Yeah, yeah, you work on really small details to get things, er, you really put the
262	piece, like, you pull it apart and look at the tiny, tiny details. Erm <i>[pause]</i> and that's
263	great, in the beginning. Then you, you've got to put everything together and kind of
264	make it a general, a general performance. But yeah, that's what you do. At least from
265	my experience, it's good, yeah, yeah.
266	Interviewer: Mmm. I just wanted to go back to, actually, something that you said as
267	well about the idea that, when you, that when you're doing all this work that you
268	kind of don't take, you don't take it all too much into yourself so, this kind of, the
269	passion for the detail, and the kind of, and you were saying kind of, not making it, not
270	getting too obsessed I think was the word that you used. It's, yeah, it kind of leads
271	onto, a really interesting, really interesting things that I think, er, we could maybe
272	talk about a bit. How the kind of, performing, because it's, a lot of what you've
273	talked about are quite personal feelings and things, how, how the performing relates
274	to how we feel about ourselves, how you kind of feel about yourself as a person?
275	Lily: Well, yeah that's very important I think. Because, you're getting such detail
276	and you're getting such, how you do things, your teacher is focusing on just you,
277	on how you are performing that piece, and how you can perform it better, whatever.
278	So in the end, after so many years doing that, it feels, at, at least to me, and I, I know
279	it happens to a lot of people, erm, it's just, how you perform is part of your identity.
280	So, I mean, I'm trying to get rid of that, but I used to think really like that, and, it's
281	just, if you perform well, you're worth as a person, it's like even as a person, you
282	know. And if you perform wrong, if you didn't perform good, you're just a, someone
283	who doesn't. And you, when I was young, I used to think like that even when I
284	listened to people performing, just like, 'oh I don't like how they're performing', so
285	I considered them less value as a person, you know, and that's really, that's really
286	bad actually, it's really negative thinking. That's, I mean, you learn that, that's, that's
287	not how life is in a way, like, people, and yourself, have more, like, aspects of your
288	life apart from performing. And when you're, at least for me because all my life was
289	spent focused on music, erm, it felt like that during a lot of years and it's, it's really
290	negative for, for <i>you</i> in the end, because, it's just, if you do well one week, you go

291	perform in front of your teacher in the lesson and you do well, you feel great, and
292	you're on top of the world. Then the next week it goes completely different and, and
293	you're just not as prepared as, as you would like, and you just feel really really bad, and
294	in the end, it's up and downs and, which are really difficult to manage, and <i>[pause]</i> and
295	also you get more anxious because if it relates to your identity, then if you have a
296	concert, it's like, your whole person is at stake, you know, it's like, you as a person,
297	it's not you performing music, or, the pianist, it's you as a person are on the spot in
298	a way, for me, is how I felt. While I'm trying to, to manage that in terms of, if a
299	performance doesn't go well, erm, there's other aspects of your life and you're still
300	valuable as a person and you're not less, people, people have to respect you anyway
301	even though you did, you didn't do well in a concert maybe, and you deserve, er,
302	value and respect from others. So, er, yeah, that's, er, that's something that, that's
303	something about conservatoires is, I feel, and I've been thinking a lot about this.
304	We, like, actors get coaching. Sports get coaching, like, physically, mentally, how to
305	cope with performance, how to cope with being a presence on stage, how to cope
306	with your thoughts and how you talk to yourself, erm, and with posture. But
307	musicians don't. We don't get any coaching from anything, like, er, we are just, kind of,
308	I feel sometimes we are thrown into the deep end. We just get our one-to-ones. If
309	you are lucky you've got a really supportive teacher, you manage well. If you get a
310	really, like my Russian teacher was, I ended up crying every lesson, you know, and
311	that gets into you in the end. So, and we, you just do that and you have to perform
312	and you have to meet certain standards of the classical world. And, it's all this pressure
313	that comes onto you, that if you don't have tools to manage with them, it just gets
314	too much and people having breakdowns and anxieties, and, and, that's really common
315	here, like. I'm really lucky that I did the Masters in Performance Science because now
316	I, theoretically, I know about all of this, and then I can try and apply it. But some people
317	don't, and they don't know, and, I got Alexander Technique, but it's an elective,
318	I, I could choose that, but a lot of people don't have that. And we don't get
319	coaching on how to manage practice, how to manage our time and practice, how
320	to manage pressure from yourself and from like your teachers and whatever. Erm,
321	you don't get coaching on how to have stage presence and, erm, and then how to

322	manage thoughts that come in during the performance itself. So I feel there's a
323	huge gap in there which, er, it'd be great to, to change. It's just, yeah, get musicians,
324	classical musicians, coaches. Cos in the end performance, any type of performance,
325	like, even if you give a public speak [sic], it needs certain skills. And if your one-to-one
326	teacher's just focused on the music, which is great, that's great, but then there's
327	a lot of other aspects as a musician you need to develop. Which yeah, they come
328	through experience, but it would be much better if you learnt them on your training
329	as a, training as a performer and not only as a musician. Because, while, I feel while
330	we train to perform in the end, like you have to do your recital, we don't train all
331	of these aspects of performance that sports and actors do, yeah.
332	Interviewer: Why do you think it is that those things aren't provided here?
333	Lily: Erm, I mean, there's not enough research on it and it's starting to be, which is
334	great. But if you look into the research into sports there's a huge amount, and, like
335	coping mechanisms, and all of them can be applied to music which is the great thing.
336	But I think, classical music and, it's been developed as a, not, like, like, as the music as
337	the, as the important thing, so, all is under that standard of how you have to perform
338	the music but it's not, it's not focused on how to be a better performer, in a way.
339	While sports, yeah you have to run a certain speed, er, so the focus on how can the
340	athlete do that better, so they need to look at their nutrition and their sleep and
341	their training and their physical. And the actors, I suppose it's, it's kind of, I mean
342	actors can be really related to musicians as well. But, because to perform as an actor
343	you need to express certain emotions which are really more concrete, even though
344	it's pretty abstract, you know when you're performing you want to express, an, er,
345	in that moment you're sad and you've got to get crying and express that, the loss of
346	someone. While in music, it's, yeah, you can get that idea into music, but it's subjective,
347	and you can perform without thinking about that. Like, in the end it's much better if
348	you are performing a sad piece, and you think maybe about that, maybe someone
349	who's lost someone, and you try to convey that into your music. But that's subjective.
350	You can still play that piece of music without thinking about that, and without
351	thinking about conveying any emotions. So I think that's the difference. Music is

352	really abstract and really different to put into research and words. So, I think that
353	might be a bit of the, the problem in music.
354	Interviewer: Yeah. You were saying that, erm, you could play, because it's such a
355	subjective thing, music, you could play a piece thinking about the emotion you wanted
356	to convey or not, or just without thinking anything. How do you think those two
357	versions would be different if you?
358	Lily: So, I mean, it's, that's the thing. When you really get into conveying that
359	emotion and you really feel it, like the audience can feel it. And they tell you, it's like,
360	'wow, that moment was great, I don't know what you did, but it was great'. While if
361	you just play, there's no intention, if you don't think about expressing anything or
362	communicating anything, the music feels flat. I'm sure it's flatter in terms of, erm,
363	crescendos and diminuendos, whatever is happening, but, yeah the music can
364	feel really stuck and technical. You just focus on, 'oh, I have to press this, and now this,
365	and now this'. But there's nothing more behind that. And, like I'm sure if you do
366	two recordings, you can feel, I don't know, I don't know, what is exactly, like,
367	concretely and objectively the difference, but I'm sure anyone can pick up the
368	difference, yeah. And more if it's in life, in a live situation, than a recording, erm.
369	Interviewer: Why do you think that is?
370	Lily: I suppose it's, it's just because of being in the moment. The music is getting
371	directly to you when in a recording there's always a lot of things in between. Like the
372	screen, the recorder, the time. You are not in the situation. Yeah.
373	Interviewer: Yes. Very interesting. I'm just thinking. I think, yeah.
374	Lily: I don't know if I branch out too much from what you were trying to?
375	Interviewer: No, not at all. It's all really interesting and the point is to just kind of,
376	for us to talk about the things that look, that are important to you on this topic. I think
377	that, you know, these ideas of, sort of what you're, about how you feel when you're
378	playing are kind of really fruitful. That's kind of, cos, it seems from what you said
379	that that's quite an important part of the performing. And it's really interesting, yeah.

380	Lily: Yeah. But then this, it's like you have to also develop that. So if you get a teacher
381	that helps you develop that from a young age, just to, when you play not just play
382	but try and express something and communicate something, because of the music
383	is so abstract. Erm, while if you've got a teacher that just focuses on, 'oh put this
384	finger here, do this and do that', but there is no meaning behind it, you can still get
385	your masters in performance, you know. Er, but I think that's kind of the, the
386	difference, but you've also got to learn how to do that. And it's because of that, like,
387	if you have a, if you have an actor you have something concrete to, a goal, of an
388	emotion to express. While if you're a musician, it's what the music means to you
389	and then how you can express that to the audience. And then they probably think
390	a completely different thing about it, you know. <i>[both laugh]</i> So, it's just everything
391	is really subjective.
392	Interviewer: Yeah. The idea that you could put one emotion in and that they could
393	somehow perceive that but take something else
394	Lily: As a, yeah, maybe for them it's like, maybe they get to cry as well because they
395	think that's beautiful but maybe they then think about a beautiful moment they had
396	in the mountains <i>[laugh]</i> and, yeah.
397	Interviewer: Yeah, that kind of, the abstract nature of the music.
398	Lily: Exactly.
399	Interviewer: Yeah. Mmm. How does that kind of, when you're preparing to perform,
400	so when you're learning a piece, how much do these kind of things, the kind of,
401	the feelings and the emotions, how much, how much do you think about that in your
402	preparation?
403	Lily: So that's, yeah, that's interesting because it's really easy to get caught up on
404	just the technique of it, and erm, and focusing on how I'd do that, it needs to sound
405	this way <i>[clicks fingers]</i> so how do I do it technically? But, I mean at this point, in my
406	Masters, your teachers always, if you are focusing too much on just playing and not
407	thinking of anything else, they, they point it out in a way. Each teacher has their way

408	of pointing it out, but, so in the end also, maybe when you're learning the piece you
409	first focus on more technical stuff, but then, there's a point that you get stuck and
410	you don't know what to do more with the piece. So I think there's always a balance on,
411	at the beginning it's more technique but you're still, at least for me I still think about,
412	then what I want to say with that. Because if not, in the end, it's just notes, which
413	are dots on a score, so it, that really has no meaning, you know. So you've got to
414	always try and find a meaning for you and then when you've learned the piece and
415	it's more about what you want to express, then how you do it, because you've
416	already learned it, how to do it. So it's kind of starting with technique and then it
417	goes more into thinking about emotions and music. Erm, but yeah it's always finding
418	a final balance, because even though then you think about what you want to express,
419	you're still thinking about, OK, but, you know you're conscious still of the movements
420	you're doing and how you're doing it.
421	Interviewer: While you're performing?
422	Lily: Yeah, yeah. And in your practice. Yeah, it's like what you want to express is
423	an aspect of the performance that you need to practice as well, you know. Like when
424	you see the actor just practising a gesture, one, like one time over another, it's kind
425	of the same. You know you want to express that and then you've got to find a
426	way of doing it, that next practice, yeah.
427	Interviewer: As well as the technical side?
428	Lily: Yeah. Yeah, the ideal point is that those develop at the same time. Like, OK,
429	you want to express this, then how do I do it technically and what do I feel inside
430	while I'm, while I'm doing it? That kind of should be balanced in your practice, but
431	sometimes you get more technical passages which is fast and you don't have time to
432	think! <i>[both laugh]</i>
433	Interviewer: So it's like a balancing, a balancing act.
434	Lily: Yeah.
435	Interviewer: Cool. Let me just have a look and see how we're doing on time. Oh yeah

436	OK, not bad. Erm, great, OK. I think, erm, yeah, I think that's really great. I think, I
437	mean I could kind of talk to you about it all day I think. What do you think is the kind
438	of, the most significant thing that we've talked about today? I mean, I know we've
439	covered a lot, quite a lot already. In terms of, kind of, your performing. Is there a sort of
440	Lily: I suppose for me at least the important aspect of it, I would say, is like the
441	mismatch of like the performer experience and the audience experience. Then, yeah,
442	erm, and then how this mismatch is explained by like the familiarity with a piece,
443	the pressures from the environment, from yourself. Like the pressures from the
444	environment in the end I think are more from yourself than another thing. Because
445	yeah, a teacher can put pressure on you, at least at a Masters level, maybe on the
446	undergrad you feel more the pressure from the teacher. But in the end it's how you
447	manage that. You can feel that pressure but then manage it in a way that doesn't
448	affect you that much. So it's just kind of getting into that mismatch and trying to see
449	why that happens and trying to understand why that happens in terms of, yeah, like, in
450	terms of like the standards of the piece the performer has and, and how being in a,
451	in this environment as RCM could impact in, could have positive impact, could have
452	negative. It depends on, on then how you experience it as well, erm, and then, yeah.
453	Yeah I would say that's, kind of er, I've never thought deeply. It's always been a thing
454	in, in me, in my kind of, development of this mismatch. Which sometimes it's been
455	like, OK, I don't want to do this anymore because I don't enjoy it. But then the
456	enjoyment from the audience keeps me going, you know. Erm, and then it's just
457	kind of developing self-trust in yourself, and, and how teachers, we're being kicked out.
458	Interviewer: Shall we pause just there?
459	Lily: Yeah.
460	Interviewer: Alright, there we go.
461	Lily: So, yeah, it's just, I was talking about that mismatch. Which, in the end it's, it really
462	comes, I think it comes down to what the person is experiencing in their environment.
463	So it's not that, I was trying to say it's like, it's not that the environment is like, high
464	pressure or not, it's like what you get from it. So when I came at the beginning I was

465	like, really nervous, and, and I felt a lot of pressure. But then when we started this
466	piano club it kind of all calmed down and you just realise everyone is like you, just
467	trying to get through it. Erm, so that was one important aspect I thought, that came
468	out. Erm, yeah.
469	Interviewer: You were saying that, something, there are, you were saying there
470	are kind of positive and negative aspects to somewhere like this, you know, a place
471	like this.
472	Lily: Yeah, exactly. I mean, the positive aspects is just pushing me to, er, to a certain
473	standard of quality, let's say, that, that you couldn't get in other places maybe. I'm,
474	erm, I mean, through Europe there's great places as well, it's not just about RCM,
475	but these kind of institutions. Erm, then the negative aspect is that if you don't
476	manage well, that kind of feeling of you have to perform to certain standards or,
477	then if you don't manage well that, or the pressure gets too much into you and it
478	can have a really negative impact. It's just like, on your performance and your day to
479	day life, kind of thing, yeah.
480	Interviewer: Wow, so it can have a really big impact, if it's?
481	Lily: Yeah, it can. I mean, yeah because it's usually, you spend a lot of hours alone
482	practising, so spending too much time alone can be sometimes, <i>[laughs]</i> cannot get
483	really, like you just get into your mind too much. And you don't, you are not objective
484	of, that's why like the piano club for example for me was really useful, because it's
485	a way of getting feedback from a musician as well who you kind of value in terms of
486	a good musician. And they are saying 'oh that's going great, maybe you could do a
487	bit of that and a bit of, but, but keep going'. And it's not that you think, oh I'm crap,
488	this is awful, you know, you change that and you think, oh, maybe I'm not doing that
489	bad, and yeah, erm, so yeah.
490	Interviewer: So the kind of, working with, yeah, that interaction with people doing
491	the same thing is helpful?
492	Lily: Yeah it's really helpful. And I think, at least in RCM I feel sometimes people

493	are really individual and everyone is so busy, that you don't have time to, to kind of
494	socialise. Or if you socialise you just go for drinks, which is not my cup of tea. <i>[laughs]</i>
495	So, so sometimes you do feel lonely in this institution which is not helpful. Erm, so
496	yeah, it's also managing, in the end your performance is affected with all, all of your
497	aspects of your life in a way. Erm, so everything kind of has to be balanced. So if you
498	want to, so if, this institution for me, at least, it feels a bit individual, and people are
499	really individual so that's been a bit of a struggle for me. Coming from [country] which
500	everyone is just so open <i>[laughs]</i> and, at least. But, erm, but then things like piano
501	club, it kind of changed a bit my mind in that sense. Erm, so yeah.
502	Interviewer: It's interesting that idea that, it's quite a sort of, people are quite
503	individualistic in their
504	Lily: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, everyone just, because your practice is alone, so in the end
505	you've just got to make time for that. You're practising four to six hours a day, and,
506	four to six hours a day you're going to spend alone and then maybe you don't feel
507	like going out, or you just want to do your thing. So in the end it's, yeah, it's really,
508	yeah. It kind of gets really lonely sometimes. But it's part of the, part of the journey in
509	a way. <i>[laughs]</i> Yeah, just managing that, and finding your, your kind of, your group
510	of people and finding your, maybe activities aside from college and things like that,
511	yeah. Lifestyle.
512	Interviewer: Like you say, about balance, yeah.
513	Lily: Yeah, exactly, exactly.
514	Interviewer: Yeah. How do you think that the, that element, sort of, impacts on the,
515	on your playing, the sort of, erm, the solitary aspect?
516	Lily: Well it impacts more like in the day of the performance impacts on your practice
517	every day. So maybe you're just feeling down or, so that's going to mean that your
518	practice is not going to be as effective as if you're motivated. And, erm, so if you get
519	that every day then your practice is not as good as it could be. And then that's
520	going to mean that your performance in the end is probably not going to be as good

521	as it could be. Erm, while if your, aspects of your life are balanced in terms of
522	relationships, family, sports, nutritional, that aspects. Then it's probably that your
523	practice is going to be much, much better, much balanced because your mind is
524	more settled and grounded. Erm, and that then is going to have a result on your
525	performance. And not the, not the like, not the quality of the performance itself,
526	but as well how you experience your same performance. And that all comes back
527	to that. Like, I don't think how I performed this year was that much better than
528	what I did on my undergrad. I hope it was a bit better, you know, but, some years, has
529	you know, passed by. But what really changed is my experience of it. And that's
530	changed because my lifestyle has changed. Yeah, so it's all related. It's all connected.
531	Interviewer: Yeah. How do you think that your lifestyle has changed to influence that?
532	Lily: It's more balanced, erm, it's more balanced in terms of, I mean I still, here I'm
533	struggling of getting like, erm, not daily but weekly friends gatherings, kind of thing.
534	Er, but, but then, I'm in a relationship, which is really helpful, and, and then in terms
535	of nutrition and sleep and sports I'm much more conscious as well, and balance.
536	And that's really made an impact on my, I started doing a lot of yoga as well, and the
537	Alexander Technique. And that's really made an impact on my anxiety and
538	nervousness. Like, I used to be really, really nervous. And you kind of just ground
539	yourself. And you still get your nervous days and your anxiety days, like everybody.
540	And that kind of change of lifestyle, it's like even, it changed my relationship with my
541	family, having a more, just calm and grounded and mature relationship rather than
542	a, rather than a crazy, whatever. Yeah. Erm, and that all comes out to your
543	performance in the end. And I've noticed that, just by the feedback of the people,
544	like, when I, in my undergrad when I used to be really just obsessed about everything,
545	it's just, my performance, everyone was saying like, 'it feels unnatural', when now,
546	when I perform, it's like, the feedback of people is better. Which, I'm sure it relates to,
547	to my, how I've changed my thinking. And that comes to how I've changed my
548	lifestyle, erm, yeah.
549	Interviewer: It's all kind of connected.

550	Lily: Yeah. Yeah, it is. That's why, that's why I think coaching for musicians would be
551	really useful. Because you learn that, but you learn that because you've thrown,
552	you've been thrown into the deep end. So if you don't learn, you don't survive.
553	Erm, so it would be helpful if someone kind of helps you on that journey in a way.
554	I mean, everyone would, would gain, erm, benefits from having a coach life, isn't it.
555	<i>[laughs]</i> But because you have to perform and get up on the stage and do something,
556	it's kind of, it becomes a bit, it becomes important, erm, if you want to stay in this
557	world of performing.
558	Interviewer: Yeah. Amazing. I reckon that's enough. Thank you so much. Do you have
559	any questions before we wrap up?
560	Lily: No.
561	Interviewer: No? OK, great. Thank you. Brilliant.